5/1/2023

To: Human Services Conference Committee

Re: Subminimum Wage Provisions in HF 2847

Madam Chair and Committee Members:

I am writing in support of the Governor’s proposal in HF 2847 that would end paying people with disabilities less than minimum wages in Minnesota. Minnesota had adopted the policy of being an Employment First state in 2014, however, this practice has continued to exist, and with its existence we cannot truly as a state move to prioritizing Community Integrated Employment. The practice continues to reiterate that those that have disabilities are less than and shows them that worth less than the minimum.

This stems from Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor and Standards Act of 1938. This is the law that allows disability service providers to pay those that they are serving less than minimum wage. If someone has a job in the community, and they are getting paid by the business that they are working at, they are getting paid at least minimum wage. They are then also able to fully participate with the culture of that employer. One thing that came up many times in the meetings that we had with those that are paid less than minimum wage, is that that felt “other than”, “different from”, or “less than” the “real” employees of the company. This reemphasizes the discrimination, ablism, segregation, and oppression that those with disabilities have always faced.

If the goal for the State of Minnesota is to be “One Minnesota” and have all that live here, feel like they are valued, that must include those with disabilities. We know how much value, self-worth, and dignity come from employment, and that is what ending sub-minimum wages will bring to these people. This legislation will do much more than just end sub-minimum wage, it is a comprehensive package with investments and policy reforms that will:

* Increase wages for Minnesotans with disabilities
* create inclusive workplaces for Minnesotans with disabilities
* bring more people into the workforce and increase labor force participation
* provide funding and subject matter expertise to assist providers through the transition to become competitive integrated employment service providers

The goal is really to be able to get people into jobs that they are good at, passionate about, and the “right fit” for them with the right supports, I believe that this is truly possible and the direction that the state should be going for those with disabilities. It is time to invest in these services that have been proven to work.

Sincerely,

 

Larissa Beck

Director of Community Living