



## MINNESOTA CHAPTER

Human Services Conference Committee  
May 2, 2023

Chair Hoffman, Chair Noor, and Human Services Committee Members,

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers, MN Chapter (NASW - MN), we are writing to comment on the Human Services omnibus bills. In particular, we appreciate the House position phasing out subminimum wage. We also support expanding mental health training opportunities through The Center for Rural Behavioral Health training clinic at Minnesota State University, Mankato, but want to note that the House includes it in this jurisdiction while the Senate has it in the Health and Human Services omnibus bill.

NASW - MN is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in our state, representing over 2000 social workers. Our members do both direct practice (clinical and non-clinical) and macro practice. We work as mental health professionals, in child welfare systems, nursing homes, home care settings, schools, and residential care. We advocate for people who are positively impacted by components of this bill, and want to ensure that social work professionals are supported in their work.

Social work is based on a mission to enhance human well-being. Our core values include the dignity and worth of individuals, including the right to self-determination, and the importance of human relationships. Eliminating the practice of paying people with disabilities less than minimum wage supports these principles.

We demonstrate that we value people when we pay them a fair wage that is comparable to others. Ensuring that disabled people have the same labor rights as other Minnesotans will not only increase their sense of self-worth, it will improve their lives as they have more options to participate in the marketplace. Furthermore, life is more fulfilling when we can choose our place of employment. We can create and maintain relationships at work while also earning the income we need. Support services for people with disabilities have evolved since the practice of subminimum started decades ago, and we are able to train and support people with disabilities to successfully work in many settings.

Social work is a professional degree that comes with extensive training and a requirement for direct practice experience. Graduate students pursuing their clinical license need internship settings that provide practical experience with appropriate supervision. The Center for Rural Behavioral Health training clinic will allow a convenient setting for social work students attending Minnesota State University, Mankato. This not only reduces barriers for students completing their graduation requirements, it allows university students an opportunity to serve their local community by increasing access to mental health providers in an underserved region. Tying the setting to the University with clinicians in training is an efficient model to expand direct services for local residents.

Thank you for your support of these items.  
Sincerely,

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