



March 22, 2022

House Human Services Policy Committee

SUBJECT: LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR HF 2847

Dear Chair Noor and Committee Members,

Our organization is writing to you today in support of HF 2847 and specifically the proposal to phase out subminimum wage for people with disabilities in Minnesota.

There is much to like in this bill and we are grateful to all who have worked so hard to bring it this far. We are well aware that the subject of subminimum wage is a controversial one, and that many parents of children with disabilities are fearful about what would happen if subminimum wage is eliminated. Many parents are asking “What will happen to our children?” “Where will they go?” “If not subminimum wage, then what?”

And we understand where this fear comes from since many parents have been operating from a position of scarcity and have fought long and hard to scrape together the needed support for their child. The idea of change is frightening, but one lesson we have learned in our years of advocacy is that we as parents do not make our best parenting decisions when we are operating from a position of fear.

Many of the parents we talk to in our role as advocates are surprised to learn about things like MA-EPD or job coaching, customized employment, or vocational rehabilitation supports. And eliminating subminimum wage does not have to mean eliminating the things people currently do that they enjoy--it simply means paying people with disabilities equally to everyone else.

Any person with a disability or their families will tell you there are a hundred different ways that society tells people with disabilities “You are less than.” “You are not as worthy as a non-disabled person.” “You do not deserve the minimum standards that apply to everyone else.” Society sends that message in the judgemental looks our children receive when they may become overwhelmed in public. We see it in the treatment plans that demand eye contact or sitting still when their bodies want to move. Discrimination is also formally enshrined in law in the form of marriage penalties, the hefty fees we assess to access medical assistance, in the asset limits that keep people from getting ahead, and in our segregated school settings. Solving all the problems of ableism in the world is a tall order, but eliminating wage discrimination is not. This is a problem we are ready to not only solve, but lead!

It is time for us as a state to say “It does not matter what your disability is, or your IQ, or how you move through the world, or how you communicate, or how much support you need. It is time for the state to say, loudly and unequivocally, “if you work, you are worthy of the minimum wage.” And some may argue that

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“subminimum wage is not a measure of your worth, but that is EXACTLY what we are saying. It is in the name “subminimum.” As in “not worthy of the minimum standard applied to everyone else.”

This effort is being led by people with disabilities, and we acknowledge for some parents the shift of handing over power to our children feels uncomfortable, but it is time for us to listen. And that is why we are so grateful for your support on the subminimum wage provision of this bill.

As parents it is our role to support, to encourage, to protect, our children, but it is not our role to be their voice. Our role is to set up the microphone, make sure it is adjusted properly, and then get out of their way..

Thank you for your consideration.

Multicultural Autism Action Network

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