



May 1, 2024

Chair Hoffman, Chair Fischer, and Members of the Human Services Conference Committee,

Good afternoon!

I am writing on behalf of The Arc Northland regarding minimum wage protections for people with disabilities. The Governor's policy omnibus HF4329/SF4399 has been before the House and Senate this week and we wanted to make you aware of the broad-based community support for the provisions related to the phase out of subminimum wages for people with disabilities.

The Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed in 2014 by former President Obama and in 2017 efforts were put forward in Minnesota to provide informed choice to individuals with disabilities who are working for less than minimum wage or "subminimum wages". WIOA states individuals with disabilities can have the opportunity to work for federal minimum wage or higher and the Olmstead Act focuses on community-based employment. I had the chance to work on the WIOA initiative while with the Center for Independent Living. This work allowed interviews with individuals working for subminimum wages across Northeastern Minnesota about their choices in employment. Many of them said "Yes, we would like to work in the community for minimum wages or higher!" but despite these wishes Minnesota continues to employ more people with disabilities earning less than minimum wage per capita than any other state. In addition, Federal law continues to allow businesses to pay people with disabilities less than the minimum wage under Section 14c of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

What we need now is legislation to support these individuals to ensure full inclusion, provide them with an opportunity to work for fair wages in the community and finally, after years of oppression, phase out subminimum wages completely.

We are incredibly grateful for your forward-thinking leadership on this critical issue and believe this will bring us closer to the vision of one Minnesota and full inclusion of individuals with disabilities.

I am happy to answer any questions or discuss information further!

Respectfully,

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Promoting and protecting the rights of people with disabilities and their families while actively supporting full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetime.