

To the Human Services Policy Conference Committee Members,

I am writing to urge the Human Services Policy Conference Committee to phase out the outdated practice of paying subminimum wages to workers with disabilities by 2028. As an organizational consultant and professional that has worked in the disability advocacy and employment space for five decades, I offer the testimony that this practice is both outdated and unnecessary. I would like to make these important points for your consideration:

1. No other minority population would tolerate earning subminimum wages for their labor.
2. Arguments advanced by opponents of the proposal to eliminate payment of subminimum wages do **not** translate to significant job loss, agency closures, or displacement of people in services; services providers adopting contemporary service practices are succeeding in transforming job outcomes and wages as well as increasing social inclusion.
3. Technical assistance is now available to organizations that can benefit from guided consultation in transforming their business plan, policies, and service practices.
4. A growing number of service providers in all regions of Minnesota have already demonstrated with success that eliminating the payment of subminimum wages is possible when adopting a new business model.
5. Section 14 c of the Fair Labor Standards Act was enacted in 1938 during a time when evidence-based practices and assistive technologies were unavailable to plan and support people with disabilities in living their best life.
6. Minnesota's Employment First Policy does not mean employment only; there is an emerging plan to support people that choose to work part-time as well as others that choose not to work at the present time in alternative community engagements.
7. The timeframe for implementation of a changed policy is both generous and attainable.

Finally, I would encourage the conference committee to adopt the specific language that is included in the House version of the bill. The appointed time has arrived to value the work contributions of Minnesotans living with disabilities. Please consider voting in support of this change. Many people with disabilities are counting on us.

Respectfully submitted,

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