

May 1, 2024

Human Service Policy Conference Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives and Minnesota Senate
St. Paul, MN

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to you as the parent of an autistic child and a resident of Minneapolis in support of eliminating subminimum wage for people who have disabilities.

I understand that many parents of children with disabilities are fearful about what would happen if subminimum wage is eliminated. What will happen to our children? If not subminimum wage, then what? And I hear that fear and I absolutely understand where that fear is coming from. But I would ask us all to consider whether working for subminimum wage is something that we would want for ourselves if we were in their shoes? If not, then how can we want this for our children?

For too long we have been fed the narrative that a person's worth is based on their financial output. For too long we have been fed a narrative that people with disabilities are little more than the sum of the services they receive. I would suggest that we need to imagine something different. I know for many that is a big shift. And that is why legislation was passed recently for a planning period to ensure time to make plans and explore other alternatives. To learn from the companies that have already made this switch. And to put people **who have** disabilities at the center of the conversation about what comes next.

We love to tell the story of Minnesota exceptionalism, but we don't always do such a good job of practicing it, and certainly not when it comes to equity issues. Subminimum wage is a practice that is antiquated and exploitative. It contributes to the cycle of poverty which traps so many in our disability community.

We have an opportunity before us to practice what we preach by supporting this bill to end subminimum wage for people with disabilities.

With thanks for your consideration,

Maren Christenson Hofer
Parent and Resident of District 62B