



May 2, 2024

TO: Members of the Human Services Policy Conference Committee
RE: Provisions related to special minimum wage

Senator Hoffman and members of the conference committee thank you for your commitment to public service in the development of human services policies and the opportunity to share the reasons why the 14c option should be protected.

A-Team Mn is a community of people with significant intellectual or developmental disabilities, their families and community partners. We support a full array of disability service options and informed choice. Special minimum wage, 14c, is a choice. No one is forced into or forced to stay in a 14c program. Current licensing regulations provides sufficient guard rails.

Our community supports the continuation of community center-based special minimum wage programs that provide valuable training and employment with readily available supports, reliable transportation, safe work environment, supportive social environment, ADA accommodations, community integration, and more. Our community members are most affected by any changes in 14c work options.

Recommendations from the subminimum wage task force were predetermined. Those most affected were deliberately excluded from taskforce membership where planning their future took place. They were pushed to the sidelines and disregarded. Any plan from the taskforce does not reflect the thinking, lived experience, and choices of those most affected.

Good data facilitates good decision making. To date, good data related to 14c work options in Minnesota does not exist. DHS was tasked by the 2023 legislature to collect 14c data beginning August 1, 2023. No data has been collected. 14c providers that transitioned from 14c have no tracking data to document success or failure. National studies of states that eliminated 14c work options confirm in those states increased unemployment, increased movement to life enrichment programs and many isolated at home with no services.

Since 2016, 51,000 counseling sessions have been conducted by contractors of VRS for those earning 14c wage. 86% choose to continue with 14c work option and NOT pursue competitive integrated employment.

Anecdotal information is available. A-Team MN is aware of stories of families who lost what they considered valuable services for their loved through the DHS transition grant program. They are now searching for providers offering 14c work options.

14c providers are nonprofits with primary revenue from state and federal programs. If they are required to pay minimum wage to every client will the legislature provide funds to pay them?

We respectfully ask that you not end 14c work options in Minnesota. We ask that you support a full array of disability work options. Please honor and support the informed choices of those most affected.

Thank you.

A-Team MN co-founders, Jim Clapper and Sue Hankner (ateam.mngroup@gmail.com)