

Dear Chairman Ecklund and Committee members,

My name is Maren Christenson Hofer and I am the parent of an autistic child and a resident of Minneapolis. I am writing to you today in support of HF 439 to eliminate subminimum wage for people who have disabilities.

I understand that a lot of parents 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 we have a five year 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 with people **who have** disabilities at the center of the conversation about what comes next.

We know that subminimum wage is going to be eliminated at the federal level. We either can be in front of that change or behind it, and quite frankly, we are already behind states like Alaska, Maryland, New Hampshire, Vermont, Texas, Oregon, Maine, Washington which have all passed subminimum wage bills.

We also have examples of organizations in our own state that have made the switch: Lifeworks is one example.

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, and to do it in a thoughtful way that engages all stakeholders.

I offer thanks to Representative Xiong for bringing this bill, and I ask committee members to support it.

Sincerely,

Maren Christenson Hofer