

March 21, 2023

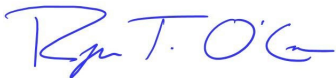
Dear Chair Noor and Members of the House Human Services Finance Committee:

I am pleased to express Ramsey County's support for the phased elimination of the use of sub-minimum wage for people with disabilities in Minnesota, as contained in the Governor's budget. As the head of a large organization that made the move to eliminate paying people with disabilities less than minimum wage approximately five years ago, we have seen the positive impacts that such a move brings to an entire organization. It is time for all of Minnesota to follow suit.

I will never forget meeting with the group of employees who were directly impacted by the elimination of sub-minimum wage work in Ramsey County. Soon after their employment status transitioned away from a third-party employer and they officially became Ramsey County employees, I was invited to a celebration recognizing the change. The event was one I will never forget. The new Ramsey County employees were jubilant; it was clear that they felt valued by and included in the work of the organization in a new and profound way. Many of these employees had been doing excellent work with Ramsey County for many years. Yet it was in this moment of transition into a regular employment status, with a commensurate wage aligned to Ramsey County's compensation manual, that I began to fully understand the importance and dignity each employee placed on that moment in their careers. Families and colleagues expressed similar sentiments of appreciation and joy, and I believe that Ramsey County is undoubtedly a better organization today because of its move to eliminate the use of sub-minimum wage jobs.

This policy change is important and absolutely the right thing to do. While legitimate issues remain around fully ensuring services and supports for all Minnesotans – and particularly those living with a disability – those issues should not impede progress toward ensuring dignified, fully compensated employment for everyone. I hope the legislature will join Ramsey County in creating a future without a sub-minimum wage for people with disabilities in Minnesota.

Sincerely,



Ryan O'Connor
County Manager, Ramsey County