Recent articles appearing in the Star Tribune in support of elimination of sub-minimum wage pay for those with disabilities fail to provide important information about current wages. These articles imply that disabled individuals are making pennies on the dollar for their work. And while that might be true for some, it has not been our experience.

My 34-year-old daughter has physical and intellectual disabilities. She worked in a “sheltered workshop” for 10 years after completing special education classes in high school and two subsequent years of “life prep” training. While at the workshop, she was routinely SKILLS TESTED to determine her specific work efficiency (compared to an unaffected worker). For example, if she could pack one box per hour and the unaffected worker could pack 10 boxes, her efficiency would be 10% and her pay would be set at 10% of the unaffected worker. We thought this was a fair way to adapt the compensation to the work output. Severely disabled adults might only achieve 1% efficiency and near able-bodied might approach 100%. However, if all of the disabled workers were to be paid minimum wage, regardless of their work output, then such an arrangement would make employing them in a profitable manner nearly impossible.

Currently my daughter is looking for a minimum wage job - every single employer once finding out she has a disability suddenly finds a reason why they won't hire her....typically the answer is the job is already filled It's a sad situation and I fear she will never find a 'typical' job.

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