

May 1, 2023

Chairs Noor and Hoffman, and Conference Committee Members,

Hello, my name is Katie McDermott, and I work at The Arc Minnesota. I will talk about my experiences working for the subminimum wage.

I worked for a provider as a “client”, but really I was a worker earning subminimum wage. I helped prepare greeting cards for sale and sorted nuts and bolts. I can remember getting a paycheck for \$30 and saying, “what’s this?” because it was so small.

Using my personal advocacy, I was able to create a peer mentoring program at the agency. I was paid \$8 per hour, and it was a big difference! For the first time, I felt like a true employee instead of a client. I was paying taxes and had some extra money to buy things I wanted. However, it took me almost five years to start making that much money.

Based on my peer mentoring experience, I was hired by The Arc in 2014. For the first time, I got paid vacations and sick days.

It is important people get paid at least the minimum wage. I worked at the subminimum wage and was paid such low wages, that I had nothing to show for my labor. Please keep the value of people in mind as you consider changes to the subminimum wage.

In conclusion, I ask for your support in passing the Governor’s budget bill. This would create a transition away from the subminimum wage. I have benefited from true employment and other people with disabilities would too.

Thank you.

Katie McDermott; St Paul, MN