



November 10, 2021

To: Members of the Senate Human Services Reform Finance and Policy Committee

Re: Subminimum Wage Taskforce proposed language modifications

Chair Abeler and members,

In June, we celebrated the passage of the Task Force on Eliminating Subminimum Wage, in conjunction with reinvention grants to help providers shift their service delivery models, which repositions Minnesota as a leader in advancing access to employment at livable wages for people who have disabilities.

The language as passed responds to the growing national and state-wide effort, led by people who have disabilities, to phase-out subminimum wage. Having a thoughtful and strategic plan in place ensures that our state – which has the highest number of 14c certificates in the nation – is ultimately prepared for this significant shift in policy and practice. It also represents a forward-thinking approach to advance equity, drive social change, and ensure the civil and human rights of Minnesotans who have intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

People who have IDD are the experts in their lives, and the legislature was wise in developing a plan to leverage the wealth of knowledge that can only come from lived experience. The current language honors the importance of centering people who have IDD in this work and acknowledges that their lived experience and expertise will set us on the right path toward expanding competitive, integrated employment.

Unfortunately, the proposed amendment would change the purpose and scope of the taskforce entirely. The language change would prevent the taskforce from developing a plan in response to the eventual prohibition of subminimum wage at the federal level. If Minnesota does not have a plan for the elimination of subminimum wage, we will leave people without meaningful employment options. We will stifle our capacity to develop innovative strategies for expanding access to meaningful jobs in inclusive environments.

We are concerned about the impact this will have on people who have IDD regarding our commitment to ensuring a good plan so that no one is left behind, that all people have informed choice and inclusive employment opportunities, and are afforded the same treatment and rights as the rest of society. This change would send a message to Minnesotans who have IDD that we are taking back our promise to help them build belonging in the community.

The Task Force language as passed can provide Minnesota with a plan to ensure a smooth transition out of subminimum wage employment and the reinvention grants support that transition. It gives us a comprehensive charge to advance employment outcomes and ensure the civil and human rights of Minnesotans who have IDD.

Thank you,

Andrea Zuber, Chief Executive Officer

Julia Burkstaller, Public Policy Director