

March 1st, 2021

Dear Committee Members;

We first wrote to this committee in November regarding our concerns about these changes to the task force. We came to the table to a work group, and voiced our concerns regarding these changes and today, through this written testimony I am again indicating our concerns for these changes.

We oppose the language changes regarding the purpose of this task force. It is important to recognize that we as a state have been doing work on promoting independence and increasing competitive employment for many years- we see this in all the work the Employment First group has done, in the federal WIOA standards and the committed work of APSE through out the state; and while that goal is important- this task force was initiated for a very specific goal- To have a plan regarding ending subminimum wage to prevent loss of services if this were to be eliminated at a federal level, state level or through litigation. **Changing the goal of the task force would in fact undo the purpose of protecting people from service gaps.**

Those who have come forward have been asking for these changes as an act of compassion to conserve things as they have always been. We have heard for the last 4 months that the existence of this group will challenge individuals rights to choices- when in fact this task force strives to ensure that there will continue to be programs to support their loved ones. Advocates and professionals across the country are indicating that this change is inevitable as we move towards wage equality for all people.

The most compassionate thing we can do to support these families is to ensure there is a plan to maintain and protect services as the world inevitably changes. If there is not a plan to sustain these programs at a time in which sub minimum wage is no longer a viable option than those doors will certainly close at that time.

To be clear- this task force is not in existence to force the end of sub minimum wage but rather to ensure that our state has a plan to make sure that we are not caught off guard and have a service disruption crisis on our hands. **This task forces sole purpose is to maintain service options and choice for all people at a time when sub minimum wage is not a choice.** The goal is not to change the services people receive but to have a plan to maintain those services and support programs in restructuring to meet the requirements of minimum wage without closing programs.



autism society of minnesota

The Autism Society has been vocal about our support for the inclusion of parent on the task force, **however we would recommend that the framework of parent inclusion not be structured solely around the diagnosis of their child, but also on their experiences within the situation:** We propose that the amendment be amended to include: 1 parent of a person currently in sub minimum wage setting, 1 parent of a person who has successfully left sub minimum wage, and 1 parent of a person who has chosen other community engagement rather than sub minimum wage.

We want to encourage the committee to engage a wide perspective and varied experiences of families to offer the greatest pool of insight as we embark on this important work

We urge the committee to recognize that lived experience is a greater value to the work to be done than diagnosis alone. As we look at creating a comprehensive plan to ensure that all individuals continue to be supported that work would be better informed by individuals with a variety of experiences in the work setting rather than simply a variety of diagnosis.

Sincerely,

Jillian Nelson, Community Resource and Policy Advocate and Eliminating Sub-Minimum Wage Task Force Co-Chair

Jean Bender, Advocacy Committee Co-Chair

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