

March 20, 2023

Chair Hoffman and Senate Human Services Committee Member:

I am writing in support of the provisions in SF 2934 to increase wages for people with disabilities by phasing out subminimum wage in Minnesota. Making these changes in wages will demonstrate Minnesota's commitment and belief to our fellow Minnesotan's with disabilities that there is equality and value to their work and lives in our communities.

Certainly, we know the subminimum wage system that was created years ago was based on a system that did not believe people with disabilities could work. Today, we know that is not true. As the great state of Minnesota has grown and has developed person-centered services, we've learned our fellow citizens with disabilities have great skills and abilities just like you and I. They are valued and needed members of the workforce. With the right supports in place, people can work and employers need and want people to work.

In 2003 Accord discontinued the use of its 14c certificate because we believed people could work and deserved to work and be paid fairly. In 2019, we merged with another well-known provider Ally People Solutions, who also strongly believed in peoples' ability to work and be paid fairly. They too had ended their 14c certificate in 2013. Today, we support individuals who are exploring careers and working in their community. We also support people who utilize day supports as part of their day to volunteer, for art and music enrichment and have other community involvement.

Accord believes the provisions in SF 2934 will support providers to transform programming to meet peoples' needs while paying at least minimum wage and enabling people to continue to have choice in their work and community lives. The growing support for this nationally makes this the right time for Minnesota to move forward on our commitment. Let's invest in people and strengthen our services to better support people and Minnesota's Employment First movement.

Sincerely,



Rita Wiersma, CEO