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March 20, 2023

Senator John A. Hoffman
Chair, Human Services
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 2111
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Honorable Senator Hoffman and members of the Human Services Committee,

This letter is written in support of the SF 2943 provisions to phase out subminimum wage. Paying individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities less than minimum wage is an outdated and life limiting practice.

Subminimum wage programs are often delivered in segregated settings and provided in environments that keep people in disability cohorts and marginalized from mainstream community experiences. These programs foster dependency on service providers and do little to advance skills, self-reliance, and employment success. Subminimum wage (14c) programs are a legacy of the historic injustices and institutionalization done to people with disabilities. It is time to end this practice and allow people with disabilities the opportunity be fairly paid and to be full and contributing members of their communities.

As a provider of disability services that recently ended a 14c subminimum wage program, I can attest to the benefits of ending this program. Individuals previously in the subminimum wage program have found a sense of community belonging and experienced economic advancement through new jobs, with new employers, and in roles that were not thought possible before. Individuals now use public transportation, have established new friendships, have received a first ever performance appraisal with a raise, and many have achieved independence in their work. Most importantly they have gained self-confidence and the self-esteem to take on new challenges and new opportunities to be more fully engaged in their communities.

Ending the subminimum wage program and transitioning to community employment has had life-changing benefits for these individuals. Your support of the SF 2943 provisions to phase out subminimum wage in Minnesota will open doors for people with disabilities in employment, in establishing better economic security and in their full participation in community life. I urge you to support the SF 2943 provisions.

Sincerely,

Karen Herman
Executive Director
Udac, Inc.