

Chair Hoffman and members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

My name is Heidi Maghan, Executive Director at Epic Enterprise Inc. in Dundas, MN. I speak to you as a provider who currently pays individuals sub-minimum wages under the 14c certificate. Epic Enterprise is in support of Senate File 4399-specifically the provision prohibiting issuance of 14c certificates which authorize payment of sub-minimum wages to people with disabilities. Epic currently has individuals working in the community at competitive wages in customized positions as well as individuals earning sub-minimum wages. At Epic we envision a community that values and embraces every individual while investing in individuals with disabilities as they pursue opportunities in the broader community. To this end, we support moving to minimum wages for work and discontinuing the use of the 14c sub-minimum wage certificate.

The State legislature, just last year, funded historic investments in individualized, integrated employment so that all people with disabilities who want to work, can earn minimum wages in jobs that match their skills and interests. For those that do not wish to work or only work part of the day, our life enrichment services provide meaningful and integrated programming to support them if they choose. I have had many clients who are earning sub-minimum wages ask me for an increase as they would like to earn more money. They want to participate in all the ordinary things we take for granted, going out to eat, buying a specific brand of shoe or outfit, going on vacation, going to a Vikings/United/Twins/Wild game, going to a concert or the theater.

Sub-minimum wages perpetuate the discrimination and inequality that people with disabilities face in the workforce. Paying individuals with disabilities less than the minimum wage is not only unjust but also undermines their dignity and value as human beings. It reinforces harmful stereotypes and perpetuates a cycle of dependency and poverty.

It is essential to recognize the abilities and contributions of people with disabilities in our society. Many individuals with disabilities are capable of performing meaningful work and should be given the opportunity to do so at a fair wage. Ending sub-minimum wages will promote inclusivity and equality in the workplace, fostering a more diverse and vibrant workforce in Minnesota.

Furthermore, ending sub-minimum wages aligns with the values of fairness and equality that are fundamental to our society. It sends a powerful message that all individuals, regardless of their abilities, are valued members of our community who deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

I urge you and the members of the Senate Human Services Committee along with the Governor to take action to end sub-minimum wages for people with disabilities in our state. Let us work together to create a more inclusive and equitable society for all.

Thank you for your time today.