

Dear Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lauren, a disabled disability rights advocate. I appreciate this opportunity to share my perspective on the potential end of subminimum wage.

More specifically, I'm writing this in response to the question, "Should people with disabilities be guaranteed a minimum wage?"

My answer is, yes. I think most people would answer the question that way. I feel like it is a question and answer that barely skims the complexities behind subminimum wage.

Just because a minimum wage should be guaranteed doesn't mean it can just go away, even over the course of five years, in my opinion.

It's not right, but it has become part of the infrastructure of disability services. After interacting with many program participants and providers, I see it as a response to maintain supports amongst the ableist restrictions that have been laid upon the most disabled Minnesotans.

People who are told that in order to get the services and supports they need, they must give up freedom of choice and often live in shared spaces, they must give up their income, and they cannot earn an income.

I understand that it can be different, and furthermore, I understand that the Task Force is aiming to create more supports to make it possible for these people to escape restrictions and thrive. I appreciate all of that.

I want to share that I feel like it will take at least five years to put the supports in place.

Also, as someone who left a restrictive home last year, I want to stress how difficult it may be for these workers to understand that they are worthy and safe to pursue higher wages and use supports they've never had before. Also, it is true that there are people who do not have a typical desire to have and spend money.

To end subminimum wage would not just provide more income and opportunities for people, but I believe a shift in thinking and a positive reevaluation of who they are as people.

It is a great thing, but I feel like it's all going to take more time than we all wish it would. And, the collective community must come together and not be afraid to have tough conversations for the greater good.

Thank you for considering what I've said.

Sincerely,

Lauren Thompson