



March 12, 2024

Dear Chair Hoffman and members of the Senate Human Services Committee:

The Minnesota Association of Professional Employees (MAPE), a union representing nearly 17,000 state employees across all agencies, boards and commissions, including the Council on Disability, the Minnesota State Academies and ADA coordinators throughout state government, believes that all workers deserve to earn a sustainable living wage. We write today in strong support of the provision in S.F. 4399/ H.F. 4392 that would phase out wage discrimination for persons with disabilities in Minnesota.

Wage discrimination in any form has no place in our state. In 2014, Minnesota recognized the corrosive impact that inflation had on the sustainability of the state's minimum wage of \$6.15 per hour and federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour and acted, phasing-in increases to what is now \$10.85 per hour. Municipalities soon followed, with St. Paul and Minneapolis requiring \$15.57 per hour for workers by July 1, 2024. Yet employers are permitted under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standard Act to pay their employees with intellectual or developmental disabilities a subminimum wage, which in Minnesota averages an appalling \$4.15 per hour or \$9,296 per year. This is 38 percent below the U.S. Department of Human Services federal poverty level. Furthermore, the Living Wage Institute at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) estimates that a living wage for the Twin Cities Metro is \$22.49 per hour for a single adult, or \$46,779 per year.

Minnesota has spent countless resources in designing programs and workplace protections to increase accessibility for persons with disabilities to fully participate in our communities, attain meaningful employment and receive the respect and dignity to which all people are entitled. However, the subminimum wage undermines that work, trapping the disability community in poverty and preventing those that may be able to live independently from doing so. Please support S.F. 4399/ H.F. 4392.

Sincerely,

Devin Bruce
Director of Legislative and Political Affairs