

March 12, 2024

Dear Human Services Committee,

My name is Megan Perera and I am a Minnesota resident. I am writing to ask that you support a guaranteed minimum wage for disabled workers.

Everyone deserves to be fairly compensated for their labor. This should not be a topic of debate. Wages are a clear numerical indicator of how much an organization values employees and their labor. Wages indicate the value of an employee's *labor*, not the end product.

Wage differences are weaponized as a tool of discrimination against women and people of color; there are countless studies exploring the effects of this discrimination if you have somehow not heard of the gender pay gap. I am a woman of color and have personal experience being underpaid when my white and male counterparts get paid more for the same labor.

In addition to having tangible consequences on financial stability, being underpaid is incredibly demoralizing. I have persistently advocated to be fairly paid for my labor; when it fails, it feels like my life and health are meaningless to other people. If you have never felt like that, I can assure you it is one of the worst feelings in the world.

When disabled people are paid less than minimum wage, they are being told that their time and effort is less meaningful and worthwhile than able-bodied workers. They are being told that their life and health are meaningless because people are not willing to change outdated systems that directly harm them.

The main argument that I have seen for maintaining subminimum wage is that disabled workers do not produce as much as able-bodied workers and therefore should be paid less. Wages indicate the value of *labor*, not the value of the end product. Disabled workers work just as hard as able-bodied workers and deserve to be compensated just as much as able-bodied workers.

We should not be asking whether disabled people deserve to make minimum wage.

We should be asking how to best implement a guaranteed minimum wage while minimizing the negative consequences for disabled people and their employment opportunities.

I hope to see your support of a guaranteed minimum wage for disabled workers in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Megan Perera".

Megan Perera
775 Bayard Avenue, Unit 2
St. Paul, MN 55102