



COUNCIL ON DISABILITY

1600 University Avenue W, Suite 8, St. Paul, MN 55104

651-361-7800 | www.disability.state.mn.us

Honorable Chair Senator John Hoffman
Senate Human Services Committee
RE: Section 20 of SF 4399 – Senator Hoffman
March 13th, 2024

Chair Hoffman and members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

The MN Council on Disability would like to express our unequivocal support for section 20 of SF 4399 as introduced, which establishes a sunset date for and prohibits subminimum wages for people with disabilities in Minnesota.

Section 20 of SF 4399 proposes setting a sunset date of August 1st, 2028 for the practice of paying subminimum wages to workers with disabilities. This practice, deeply rooted in outdated perceptions of disability, undervalues the contributions of workers with disabilities and perpetuates economic disparities. By establishing a clear timeline for the end of subminimum wages, Section 20 of SF 4399 paves the way for a more inclusive and equitable workforce, one that recognizes the abilities and potential of every individual.

The passage of this provision is not only a matter of economic justice but also a testament to our shared values of dignity, respect, and equality. It acknowledges that the strength of our workforce lies in its diversity and that the full and equitable participation of Minnesotans with disabilities enriches our state and our economy.

Transitioning away from subminimum wages aligns with broader efforts to ensure that all Minnesotans, regardless of ability, have access to fair employment opportunities and the means to lead as integrated and independent lives as possible. It encourages businesses and organizations to adopt more inclusive practices and to recognize the value of a diverse workforce.

We strongly urge your support for section 20 of SF 4399. By championing this legislation, we can take a significant step towards a more inclusive Minnesota, where every citizen is valued and afforded equal opportunities to contribute to our society and economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Trevor Turner'.

Trevor Turner
Public Policy Director
trevor.turner@state.mn.us

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David Dively'.

David Dively
Executive Director
david.dively@state.mn.us



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



March 12, 2024

The Honorable John A. Hoffman
Chair, Human Services Committee
Minnesota Senate
2111 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Jim Abeler
Ranking Minority Member, Human Services Committee
Minnesota Senate
2207 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Legal Aid letter regarding SF 4399

Dear Chair Hoffman, Ranking Minority Member Abeler, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony regarding SF 4399. We have comments on two part of the bill—sections 1 & 19.

Special certificate prohibition (Section 1, lines 1.18-1.28)

Last year, the legislature voted to invest in employment services and individualized supports to assist workers with disabilities find and retain jobs in which they earn at least minimum wage. There was also investment in resources and technical assistance for 14(c) certificate holders to shift their business models, ensure financial viability for their organizations, and stop paying people with disabilities less than the minimum wage. We ask that you finish this work and support SF 4399, sunseting 14(c) certificates. All Minnesota employees deserve to make at least minimum wage for their work.

Opponents of the bill say that 14(c) organizations will have to shut their doors if they are not allowed to pay their employees less than the minimum wage. However, we know this is not the case. So far, eight 14(c) organizations have taken advantage of the funding made available last session and are working towards phasing out subminimum wages by April 2024. Others made the transition on their own before then—in the Twin Cities and in greater Minnesota.

Thirteen states and the District of Columbia have ended the subminimum wage, and several more are phasing it out. Vermont phased out subminimum wage employment for people with disabilities in the early 2000s. In studying the last sheltered workshop that closed in Vermont,

Legal Aid Letter re: SF 4399

March 12, 2024

University of Vermont researcher Brian Dague reported that 80% of people had found competitive employment in the community. The remainder found community-based, integrated non-work placements—but at minimum wage or higher.

Minnesota can and should do better for people with disabilities and support employment services over funding subminimum wage employment. This can be done by investing in the right services and supports. Minnesota must live up to the tenets of Olmstead, Employment First, etc. We can build a more just, more supportive employment network for people with disabilities that does not rely on over segregation and poverty wages. Please end the subminimum wage.

Informed choice in and technology prioritization in implementation for disability waiver services (Section 19, lines 19.17-19.27)

The Disability Law Center (DLC) urges the committee to reject the changes to this section. This change would require lead agencies to offer waiver recipients assistive technology or remote supports before offering them direct support staff in initial cases and renewals. The change would impact all waiver recipients, regardless of whether they are satisfied with their current direct support staff and do not wish to alter their service plans. It is not the informed decision making required by this statute when one type of service is favored and must be discussed and rejected before the full array of services available are presented. Waiver recipients should have all service types explained to them, and then be permitted to make an informed decision about what services they would like to use. Please reject this provision.

Thank you for allowing us to submit input on SF 4399.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Purrington
Legal Director/Deputy Director
Minnesota Disability Law Center



Ellen Smart
Staff Attorney
Legal Services Advocacy Project

This document has been formatted for accessibility. Please call Ellen Smart at 612/746-3761 if you need this document in an alternative format.

March 13, 2024

Re: Minnesota Coalition for Disability Wage Justice Letter of Support, SF 4399



Chair Hoffman and members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

On behalf of the Minnesota Coalition for Disability Wage Justice (MCDWJ), we write in support of Senate File 4399 – specifically the provision prohibiting issuance of 14(c) certificates which authorize payment of subminimum wage to people with disabilities. We need to ensure all people with disabilities are paid the minimum wage or higher in Minnesota.

MCDWJ is a statewide coalition of nearly 40 entities all working toward the same goal – wage equity for people with disabilities. We represent service providers, labor unions, advocacy organizations, higher education institutions, social workers, legal experts, and – most importantly – people with disabilities, their parents, family members, and other trusted supporters.

As you know, federal law allows businesses to pay people with disabilities less than minimum wage through Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act. More than 3200 people with disabilities in Minnesota legally earn less than minimum wage, and our state – a purported leader in disability rights – employs more people with disabilities earning subminimum wage than any other state in the nation (per capita).

On average, Minnesotans with disabilities who work under 14(c) make just \$4.15 per hour, but some earn as little as 7 cents per hour.

Many people earning subminimum wage are in segregated settings. This contradicts the integration mandate of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which requires that people with disabilities have access to the most integrated settings possible – including employment. Just last year, the United States Department of Justice found that employers who pay less than minimum wage in these segregated settings may be in violation of the ADA.

We urge the Minnesota Senate to support the prohibition of 14(c) certificates as outlined in SF 4399, which will help ensure that all workers with disabilities are paid minimum wage or higher by 2028.

This change is possible. The Minnesota Task Force on Eliminating Subminimum Wages created a robust transition plan that would make sure no one is left behind in the transition to ensuring Minnesotans with disabilities are paid minimum wage or higher. Just last year, the legislature funded that plan, making historic investments in individualized, integrated employment programming so all people with disabilities can earn minimum wage in jobs that build on their skills and interests.

Technical assistance, training and support is available for service providers, people with disabilities and their families to make this change. Service providers who have electively and successfully ended subminimum wage are available and are providing peer-to-peer mentoring so other providers remain viable. People who do not want to work will continue to have robust, enriching programming to support their needs during the day.

It is time for Minnesota to live up to our stated commitment to integration, inclusion, belonging, and justice for all Minnesotans. We call on the legislature to support wage equity for all Minnesotans with disabilities now.

Respectfully signed,

Members of the Minnesota Coalition for Disability Wage Justice

- Accord
- AFSCME Council 5
- Autism Society of Minnesota
- City of St. Paul
- Cow Tipping Press
- Dakota County Social Services
- Dungarvin
- Employee Ownership Network
- Epic Enterprise
- Great Work
- Griffin-Hammis Associates
- Hennepin County
- Howry Residential Services
- Inclusive Networking
- Integrated Living Options
- Kaposia
- Legal Services Advocacy Project
- Lifeworks
- Mains'l
- Medica
- Minnesota APSE
- Minnesota Association of Professional Employees
- Multicultural Autism Action Network
- Minnesota Council on Disability
- Minnesota Disability Law Center
- Minnesota Inclusive Higher Education Consortium
- National Association of Social Workers, Minnesota Chapter
- National Federation of the Blind, Minnesota
- Oak Tree Support Services
- Phoenix Residence
- Ramsey County
- Reach for Resources
- Residential Services, Inc.
- SEIU Healthcare Minnesota & Iowa
- Strengths at Work
- The Arc Minnesota
- Udac
- University of Minnesota Institute on Community Integration



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

Tuesday March 12, 2024

To: Senate Human Services Committee
Re: Senate File 4399

Chair Hoffman and Committee Members,

We are writing in support of the important provisions in SF 4399 - specifically the provision to phase out the outdated practice of paying people with disabilities subminimum wages in Minnesota. These changes would affirm the civil rights of people with disabilities and align our state's policies with our state's values. This will help advance equity, drive social change, and protect human rights.

Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, passed in 1938, allows people with disabilities to be paid less than the state or federal minimum wage. It is an archaic and discriminatory practice that contributes to the cycle of poverty and results in segregation of people with disabilities.

Ending payment of subminimum wages to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities while expanding community-based employment and day support services is possible because of investments last session in technical assistance and trainings offered by the Minnesota Transformation Technical Assistance Center (MTI) through the UMN's Institute on Community Integration. Employment providers in Minnesota and across the country have been transforming to services focused on competitive employment for decades. Organizational transformation that is intentional often results in greater community inclusion and better quality of life for people with disabilities. Research supports this, and providers that have successfully made these transformations have stories demonstrating this.

All individuals with disabilities – no matter their support needs – deserve the opportunity to explore, find, and keep jobs and careers that provide personal fulfillment and help build wealth. People with IDD should have supports from individuals and systems to help them find and keep jobs based on their preferences, interests, and strengths.

It's time for Minnesota to look to the future and align our values of inclusion and opportunity into practice through our public policy.

Julie Bershadsky, Director of Community Living and Employment, ICI, UMN



March 13, 2024

Re: The Arc Minnesota, SF4399



Chair Hoffman and Committee Members,

We are writing in support of the important provision in SF4399 that would end the outdated practice of paying people with disabilities subminimum wage in Minnesota.

It is time to ensure that people with disabilities in Minnesota are paid the minimum wage or higher by 2028. This change would affirm the civil rights of people with disabilities and align our state's policies with our state's values. This will help advance equity, drive social change, and truly protect human rights.

Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, passed in 1938, allows people with disabilities to be paid less than the state or federal minimum wage. It is an archaic and discriminatory practice that contributes to the cycle of poverty and results in segregation of people with disabilities.

All individuals with disabilities – no matter their support needs – deserve the opportunity to explore, find, and keep jobs and careers that provide personal fulfillment and help build wealth. People with IDD should have supports from individuals and systems to help them to find and keep jobs based on their preferences, interests, and strengths.

We know Minnesota can make this change successfully. We have a strong transition plan, backed by historic funding from the 2023 legislature. There is structure and support available for providers, lead agencies, and people with disabilities and their families to make this change and ensure no one is left behind.

Many providers in our state have already moved away from using a 14(c) certificate and they have remained strong, viable providers, while being person-centered and honoring the choices of people with IDD. People who do not want to work have, and will continue to have, robust, enriching programming to support their needs during the day.

There is momentum nationwide to phase out subminimum wage. Sixteen other states across the country have already taken on this transition, and Minnesota is poised to be the next to make this transformational change. This effort is led by people with disabilities, who want more opportunity.

Minnesotans with disabilities deserve better than this discriminatory practice and it is time for our state to put our values of inclusion and opportunity into practice through our policy. This change is far overdue.

Please support SF4399 and prohibit issuance of 14(c) certificates to effectively end the use of subminimum wage in our state and ensure people with disabilities are paid the minimum wage or higher.

Sincerely,

Andrea Zuber, CEO

Alicia Munson, CPO

Tina Rucci, Public Policy Director

The Arc Minnesota

TRANSFORMATION PLAN FOR PROVIDERS



Background

[Minnesota Transformation Initiative Technical Assistance Center](#) (MTI) was created through funding from the Minnesota State Legislature to support the reduction of reliance on subminimum wages, and expand customized, integrated employment for people with disabilities – especially intellectual or developmental disabilities – across Minnesota.

Employment means:

- Full-time, part-time, or self-employment with and without supports
- On the payroll of a competitive business or industry
- Pays at least minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage and level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by workers without a disability

Since the spring of 2022, MTI has supported 8 providers to successfully end the use of sub-minimum wages and increase employment outcomes for supported individuals. They are all still open and serving people. Six of the eight providers were in greater Minnesota; two were in the Twin Cities Metro area. MTI has supported 14 additional providers across the state to increase customized employment for the people they serve.

Every year, more and more organizations are making sure that people are paid at least the minimum wage.

You can watch the [videos of their success here](#).

What does this look like?

At the start of Technical Assistance (TA), the TA team does a “site visit” with the provider to meet with the project team, tour their sites/offices, interview stakeholders, get a sense of agency culture, and identify strengths and opportunities for transformation.

The TA team uses the research-based [10 Elements of Provider Transformation](#) to identify the strengths of the organization and goals/areas of focus for an action plan for transformation. The 10 elements outline the key action items that are part of a successful transformation plan, including:

- Identifying clear, consistent goals
- Developing an active, person-centered job placement process to support people to find and maintain customized, integrated employment.

- Outlining a communication plan that details the messaging that will be shared with each stakeholder group
- Reallocating and restructuring resources (including buildings, vehicles, staffing) to build up new or existing services while phasing out others
- Training staff to provide new services or provide services in new ways
- Engaging with the local business community and community partners
- Establishing performance measurement and quality assurance metrics to track progress and outcomes
- Integrating changes within other services areas of organization, when applicable

Following the site visit, the TA team works with project team to develop an individualized action plan, including training and TA needs. Based on their strengths and opportunities, MTI works with providers to create a plan that will support their organization to transition away from using subminimum wages and increase employment outcomes for service recipients. There is no one-size fits all approach.

The provider project team meets at least monthly with TA team to share updates, discuss roadblocks and discuss the next steps in the transformation process.

The TA team is available to provide trainings to agency staff, connect the provider to information and resources, troubleshoot challenges that arise, clarify policy, etc.

Providers join a *community of practice* with other providers receiving TA to share and learn from each other.

Providers are connected to organizational peer mentors who have successfully transformed their business model and are no longer using subminimum wages. These mentors are paid by MTI.

A Peer-to-Peer mentorship program for people with disabilities transitioning to customized, integrated employment is also provided through MTI. They work individually or in groups with people who are receiving services to support them through the process of moving to minimum wages or higher.

Moving Forward

MTI will continue to provide the following supports, which are funded through DHS via the Minnesota State Legislature through June 2026:

- Intensive and targeted technical assistance for providers
- Community of practice for providers undergoing transformation
- Quarterly webinars on topics related to transformation
- Organizational peer-to-peer mentoring
- Peer-to-peer mentoring for people with disabilities

THE COALITION FOR DISABILITY WAGE JUSTICE



LEARN MORE:

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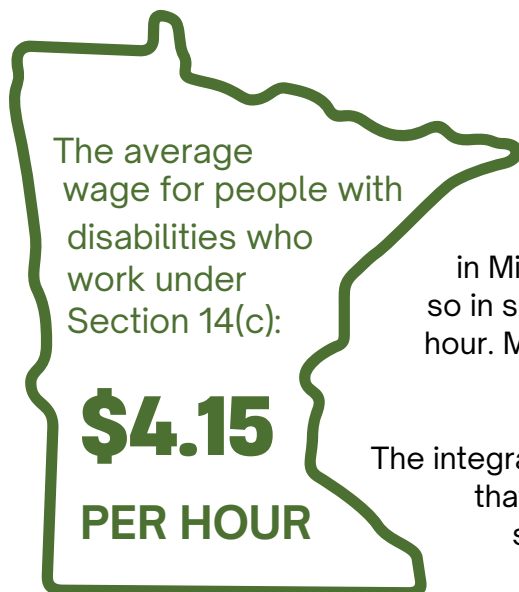
Legislative Task Force Report
on Ending Subminimum Wage



PAY PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES MINIMUM WAGE OR HIGHER

The **Minnesota Coalition for Disability Wage Justice** is fighting so that people with disabilities are paid the minimum wage or higher for the work they do. We must phase out the use of Section 14(c) by 2028. **Minimum wage for all people with disabilities, now!**

THE PROBLEM



Federal law allows businesses to pay people with disabilities less than the minimum wage under Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act. More than 3200 people with disabilities earn less than minimum wage in Minnesota. Many people who earn less than minimum wage do so in segregated settings. Some people earn as little as 7 cents an hour. Minnesota employs more people with disabilities earning less than minimum wage per capita than any other state.

The integration mandate of the Americans with Disabilities Act requires that people with disabilities have access to the most integrated settings available, including employment. In 2023, the United States Department of Justice found that employers who pay less than minimum wage may be in violation of this federal law.

THE SOLUTION

We recommend that the Minnesota State Legislature ensures all workers with disabilities are paid a minimum wage or higher by 2028. Minnesota should build on the legislative successes of 2023 — including historic investments in individualized, integrated employment programs — to ensure that all people with disabilities earn equitable, dignified wages.

This transition is possible. 16 states have successfully passed legislation to ensure people with disabilities are paid a minimum wage. There are multiple organizations in Minnesota that have shifted their models to ensure that all workers are paid minimum wage. With last year's legislation, there are now funds available to facilitate this transition.

It is time for Minnesota to live up to its commitment to wage justice for all Minnesotans. Minimum wage for all people with disabilities, now!



Minnesota Coalition
for Disability Wage Justice

THE COALITION FOR DISABILITY WAGE JUSTICE



LEARN MORE:



Legislative Task Force Report
on Ending Subminimum Wage





PHASE-INDUSTRIES
LIVE • WORK • THRIVE

March 12, 2024

Dear Chairperson Hoffman and Members of the MN Senate Human Services Committee,

I am writing to provide testimonial comment on SF 4399. My name is Tim Schmutzer, and I have been the CEO for PHASE-Industries for 16 years. PHASE-Industries is a CARF-Accredited, 245D-Licensed Provider of Day, Employment and Transportation Services, as well as VRS-funded transition & employment services. We provide supports throughout rural east-central MN. For decades, we relied on our 14(c) Certificate, deeming it a necessary accommodation in the course of helping individuals with disabilities successfully prepare for, attain and maintain paid employment. At one point, more than 200 individuals we supported were earning a Special Minimum Wage.

In 2022, we voluntarily made the decision to end our payment of Special Minimum Wages and relinquish our 14(c) Certificate. We successfully did so on 8/1/23. We made this choice, not simply because we were concerned about an imminent end to 14(c) through legislative action, but because our stakeholders, as a whole, thematically asked for more when it came to employment supports and outcomes, and advances in field technologies and best practices evolved to the point where more relevant and effective accommodations & practices became available.

The creation of employment services offered within Waivered Services meant long-term supports became available in helping individuals successfully pursue, attain and maintain competitive integrated employment. Advances in best practices, field-technologies and training/supports, such as ACRE-Certified Customized Employment/Discovery Training, Community Life Engagement (CLE) Curricula, and MTI/ICI intensive guidance were pivotal in making the transition from commensurate to competitive wages.

Importantly, your investments during a previous session in Provider Transition Grants created the exact short-term funding and expert technical assistance support (through MTI) to help us successfully transition nearly 200 individuals from subminimum wages to competitive wages. If SF 4399 were to pass, similar short-term, one-time investments are critical to achieving the intended outcomes of the bill.

The considerations, as well as the implications, contained in eliminating Commensurate Wage Certificate availability in Minnesota are multi-dimensional, complex and significant. Your decision, or vote, directly and personally affects individuals with disabilities across all Minnesota communities. I implore you, not to necessarily vote one way or the other based on my opinion on the matter, but to delve thoughtfully, openly and deliberately below the presumptive dichotomous nature of the question, and consider how, if passed, Minnesotans with disabilities can expect their systems of support to offer more meaningful occupational opportunities as a result. Your Committee must address this question in its deliberations; a confident, fact-based, affirmative answer, if one is reached, will help guide your decision on if this is the right time, in all Minnesota communities, to legislatively eliminate the Commensurate Wage Certificate.

In the course of your considerations, I wanted to share a provider experience in which it was possible to successfully make the transition, continue to provide employment & employment support opportunities, and



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ensure no one, regardless of the level of support they may have required based on their disability, was left behind. For me, personally, that was my biggest concern. I couldn't stand the thought that those who have historically been least heard, and whose voices have been underrepresented, even in the disability community at times, would be left behind or left sitting at home with no employment or occupational options as a result of relinquishing 14(c). I am happy to state, this did not happen. But, it did (and does) require an engaged and concerted provider & community strategy, including clear intentionality, creative and financially-supported transition design & planning, a compelling purpose for transitioning away from 14(c), and creative paradigm-shifting away from seemingly intractable historical models of services to achieve success. I can only speak for our services, with our team, serving citizens in our region of the state. That said, many examples of successful provider transitions exist in Minnesota, and we just happen to be one of them.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and debate on this important issue.

Respectfully,

Tim Schmutzer, CEO
PHASE-Industries

March 12, 2024

To: Senate Human Services Committee
Re: Subminimum Wage Provisions in SF 4399

Chair Hoffman and Committee Members,

Katie McDermott – Subminimum Wage Testimony

Hello, my name is Katie McDermott, and I work at The Arc Minnesota. I will talk about my experiences working for the subminimum wage.

I worked for a provider as a “client”, but really I was a worker earning subminimum wage. I helped prepare greeting cards for sale and sorted nuts and bolts. I can remember getting a paycheck for \$30 and saying, “what’s this?” because it was so small.

Using my personal advocacy, I was able to create a peer mentoring program at the agency. I was paid \$8 per hour, and it was a big difference! For the first time, I felt like a true employee instead of a client. I was paying taxes and had some extra money to buy things I wanted. However, it took me almost five years to start making that much money.

Based on my peer mentoring experience, I was hired by The Arc in 2014. For the first time, I got paid vacations and sick days.

It is important people get paid at least the minimum wage. I worked at the subminimum wage and was paid such low wages, that I had nothing to show for my labor. Please keep the value of people in mind as you consider changes to the subminimum wage.

In conclusion, I ask for your support in passing the Governor’s budget bill. This would create a transition away from the subminimum wage. I have benefited from true employment and other people with disabilities would too.

Thank you.

Katie McDermott; St Paul, MN



Residential Services Inc.

2900 Piedmont Avenue

Duluth, MN 55811

Phone: (218) 727-2696 Fax: (218) 727-2893

Website: www.residentialservices.org

March 13, 2024

Senate Human Services Committee
MN Legislature

Re: Minnesota Coalition for Disability Wage Justice Letter of Support, SF 4399

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

My name is Jon Nelson and I live and work in Duluth, Minnesota. I am the Executive Director of Residential Services, Inc. (RSI), a nonprofit organization providing support to people with disabilities. I am writing in support of S.F. 4399.

The issuance of 14(c) certificates to authorize payment of subminimum wages to people with disabilities is a practice that is now outdated and contrary to the best practices for serving people with disabilities. It is an embarrassment that Minnesota, a state that is typically a leader in disability rights, employs more people with disabilities earning subminimum wage than any other state in the nation.

It may seem challenging to make this change, but sixteen other states have done so and demonstrated how it can be done. In my own community, an employment provider (UDAC) with a long history of providing shelter-based employment using the 14(c) certificates, has made the transition to end the use of subminimum wages. UDAC was able to make use of the investments provided by the MN Legislature to succeed in this transition.

There will be people who cannot work a minimum wage job. Even now, much of the "work" being offered to these people is made up busy work. These people will be much better served with person-centered plan offering programming that meets their needs and their interests.

It is past the time to end the use of subminimum wage. Minnesota needs to follow the states leading the way in providing justice and integration for all citizens in employment. RSI is also an employment provider. We help people find jobs in the community. I have seen the impact having a real job in an integrated setting has for people with disabilities. It goes well beyond just making a fair wage, it provides meaning and purpose that benefits physical and mental health, just like it does for the rest of the population.

I hope this committee and the entire legislature will support wage equity for all Minnesotans by passing S.F. 4399. Thank you.

Respectfully,



Jon Nelson, Executive Director, RSI



www.co.dakota.mn.us

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SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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West St. Paul, MN 55118-4770
651.554.6000 • Fax 651.554.6043

March 12, 2024

Chair Hoffman and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee:

As Social Services Director in Dakota County, I am writing to express my full support for SF 4399 that phases-out the outdated and discriminatory practice of paying employees with disability less than minimum wage in Minnesota.

First, and most importantly, ending subminimum wage is the right thing to do. The practice is rooted in historical assumptions that people with disabilities can't work and earn real wages. These beliefs devalue the contributions of people with disabilities and have been disproven over and over. Dakota County has a long history of supporting people with disabilities to find jobs and careers that leverage their strengths, interests, and contributions.

We have invested in training for case managers on employment and informed choice; developed internal capacity to support transition-age youth in exploring career opportunities; established partnerships with employment services providers, employers, and state agencies to align employment efforts; and adopted our own Employment First policy to reflect a belief that all people can work and earn competitive wages. We are committed to increasing wages and economic opportunity for people with disabilities not only because it can be a ladder out of poverty, but also because it is what people tell us they want.

And while supporting these provisions is the right thing to do, it is also a practical matter. There is growing momentum nationwide to phase out subminimum wage federally. Minnesota – once a leader in employment for people with disabilities – has fallen behind. We can now build on the historic investments made last year in planning, and coordination to build capacity in our home and community-based services system to better support customized employment. These provisions would support that transition while finally ending sub-minimum wage in Minnesota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Evan Henspeter", followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Evan Henspeter
Director of Social Services, Dakota County

March 12, 2024

Re: Minnesota Coalition for Disability Wage Justice Letter of Support, SF 4399

Chair Hoffman and members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

On behalf of the Minnesota Coalition for Disability Wage Justice (MCDWJ), we write in support of Senate File 4399 – specifically the provision prohibiting issuance of 14(c) certificates which authorize payment of subminimum wage to people with disabilities.

MCDWJ is a statewide coalition of nearly 40 entities all working toward the same goal – wage equity for people with disabilities. We represent service providers, labor unions, advocacy organizations, higher education institutions, social workers, legal experts, and – most importantly – people with disabilities, their parents, family members, and other trusted supporters.

As you know, federal law allows businesses to pay people with disabilities less than minimum wage through Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act. More than 3200 people with disabilities in Minnesota legally earn less than minimum wage, and our state – a purported leader in disability rights – employs more people with disabilities earning subminimum wage than any other state in the nation (per capita).

On average, Minnesotans with disabilities who work under 14(c) make just \$4.15 per hour, but some earn as little as 7 cents per hour. Many people earning subminimum wage are in segregated settings. This contradicts the integration mandate of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which requires that people with disabilities have access to the most integrated settings possible – including employment. Just last year, the United States Department of Justice found that employers who pay less than minimum wage in these segregated settings may be in violation of the ADA.

We urge the Minnesota Senate to support the prohibition of 14(c) certificates as outlined in SF 4399, which will help ensure that all workers with disabilities are paid minimum wage or higher by 2028.

This change is possible. The Minnesota Task Force on Subminimum Wage created a robust transition plan that would make sure no one is left behind in the transition away from 14(c). Service providers that have electively and successfully ended subminimum wage are available to provide technical assistance so other providers remain viable. And just last year, the legislature funded historic investments in individualized, integrated employment programming so all people with disabilities can earn minimum wage in jobs that build on their skills and interests. People who do not want to work will have robust, enriching programming to support their needs during the day.

Minnesota has learned from the sixteen states nationwide that have already passed legislation protecting the rights of people with disabilities to earn minimum wage. It is time for us to follow their lead and live up to our stated commitment to integration, inclusion, belonging, and justice for all Minnesotans. We call on the legislature to support wage equity for all Minnesotans with disabilities now.

Respectfully submitted,

Kate Bottiger
Executive Director
Reach for Resources, Inc.
952-200-5746
kbottiger@reachforresources.org

March 13, 2024

Re: Letter of Support, SF 4399

Chair Hoffman and members of the Senate Human Services Committee:

I am writing in support of Senate File 4399—specifically the provision prohibiting issuance of 14(c) certificates which authorize payment of subminimum wage to people with disabilities. As a former teacher and current Employment Specialist with Reach for Resources, it is of utmost importance that my former students and current clients have the opportunity to find work that pays competitive wages. I encourage the senate to consider the ramifications of allowing for subminimum wage work to continue in the state of Minnesota.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed in 1990. Under this act, state and local governments are required to provide people with disabilities the most integrated settings possible. This includes employment. Most people working for subminimum wage do so in segregated settings—directly contradicting the ruling of the ADA. Just last year, the United states Department of Justice found that these segregated employment settings may be in violation of the ADA.

Minnesota prides itself on being a leader in disability rights, yet it remains that people with disabilities can earn below the minimum wage with a 14(c) certificate in our state. Many Minnesotans earn just \$4.25 per hour, with some earning as low as \$0.07. Is this considered a fair wage? Prohibit the issuance of 14(c) certificates as outlined in SF 4399 to ensure that Minnesotans with disabilities are paid minimum wage or higher by 2028.

Sixteen states in the United States have already passed legislation protecting the rights of people with disabilities to earn minimum wage. It *is* possible and necessary to follow their lead and truly commit to integration, inclusion, belonging, and justice for all Minnesotans. I implore the senate to support wage equality for all Minnesotans with disabilities.

Respectfully,

Hannah Miller

March 12, 2024

To: Senate Human Services Committee

RE: Subminimum Wage Provisions in SF 4399

Dupree Edwards – Testimony on SF 4399 – Subminimum Wage

My name is Dupree Edwards. I am testifying in support of the elimination of the subminimum wage. I live in Crystal, MN and have some mental health and cognitive disabilities. I grew up in the Twin Cities and moved to Arizona for a few years but have lived in Minnesota again since 1999. I live in licensed housing and receive the CADI waiver.

It took a lot of work to avoid being trapped in a subminimum wage job, because that is what I was offered after graduating from the Transition Plus program. However, I knew right away that I was capable of competitive employment. I knew that I might never have other opportunities if I took a “piece work” job at a DT&H. That was the name we used for subminimum wage.

After several agencies failed to find me employment, I was offered services with Workabilities, Inc. and they found me a job in the community in 2011. I was employed by a big salon with 40 stylists as someone who helped in the laundry with towels and other things needing to be washed, as well as janitorial work that needed to be completed. I was paid at least the minimum wage and appreciated that I got a real paycheck. I stayed until 2018.

Since 2018, I have worked for Lunds and Byerlys bagging groceries and taking them to people’s cars. I help to collect carts and do some cleaning work too. I have a second job at Upstream Arts as a teaching artist. I maintain my Medical Assistance through the MA-EPD program.

I believe that people with disabilities can work and should be offered support to work competitively. I was able to overcome that support not being offered to me because I believed in myself. I ask that you give other people the opportunity to find real jobs and not be stuck at subminimum wage.

Thanks for the opportunity to testify.

Dupree Edwards, Crystal MN

March 12, 2024

Re: Minnesota Coalition for Disability Wage Justice Letter of Support, SF 4399

Chair Hoffman and members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

I work for a local non-profit agency, Reach for Resources. We support people with disabilities to find and maintain meaningful employment. We strive to ensure that the people we support are landing jobs that are competitive and inclusive. It is unfortunate that despite the amazing abilities these individuals have, they aren't paid equal and fair wages. It is so disheartening to know that people can be treated this way, especially in Minnesota, which is an Employment First state.

I am writing in support of Senate File 4399 – specifically the provision prohibiting issuance of 14(c) certificates which authorize payment of subminimum wage to people with disabilities.

MCDWJ is a statewide coalition of nearly 40 entities all working toward the same goal – wage equity for people with disabilities. We represent service providers, labor unions, advocacy organizations, higher education institutions, social workers, legal experts, and – most importantly – people with disabilities, their parents, family members, and other trusted supporters.

As you know, federal law allows businesses to pay people with disabilities less than minimum wage through Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act. More than 3200 people with disabilities in Minnesota legally earn less than minimum wage, and our state – a purported leader in disability rights – employs more people with disabilities earning subminimum wage than any other state in the nation (per capita).

On average, Minnesotans with disabilities who work under 14(c) make just \$4.15 per hour, but some earn as little as 7 cents per hour.

Many people earning subminimum wage are in segregated settings. This contradicts the integration mandate of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which requires that people with disabilities have access to the most integrated settings possible – including employment. Just last year, the United States Department of Justice found that employers who pay less than minimum wage in these segregated settings may be in violation of the ADA.

We urge the Minnesota Senate to support the prohibition of 14(c) certificates as outlined in SF 4399, which will help ensure that all workers with disabilities are paid minimum wage or higher by 2028.

This change is possible. The Minnesota Task Force on Subminimum Wage created a robust transition plan that would make sure no one is left behind in the transition away from 14(c). Service providers that have electively and successfully ended subminimum wage are available to provide technical assistance so other providers remain viable. And just last year, the legislature funded historic investments in individualized, integrated employment programming so all people with disabilities can earn minimum wage in jobs that build on their skills and interests. People who do not want to work will have robust, enriching programming to support their needs during the day.

Minnesota has learned from the sixteen states nationwide that have already passed legislation protecting the rights of people with disabilities to earn minimum wage. It is time for us to follow their lead and live up to our stated commitment to integration, inclusion, belonging, and justice for all Minnesotans. We call on the legislature to support wage equity for all Minnesotans with disabilities now.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Cassie Keller, Assistant Director of Community Living Dept.
Reach for Resources
5900 Green Oak Dr Suite 303
Minnetonka MN 55343

March 13, 2024

Re: Minnesota Coalition for Disability Wage Justice Letter of Support, SF 4399

Chair Hoffman and members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

On behalf of Reach for Resources), we write in support of Senate File 4399 – specifically the provision prohibiting issuance of 14(c) certificates which authorize payment of subminimum wage to people with disabilities.

Reach for Resources is a Twin Cities based disability provider. We provide comprehensive services within our community of Case Management, Counseling and Mental Health Services, Adaptive Recreation Programming and Inclusion Services, Employment Services, Housing Services and In-Home Services. All of the services that Reach provides are community based and we work with each person to help them to achieve the highest level of independence. We work with 2500 different people and families within the Twin Cities metro area.

As a provider that has only done community based employment services, we can speak to the possibility of those that we work with to obtain community based employment. We are currently working with 110 different people who have employment services and 65% of those that we are working with are employed in their communities and receiving supports at their jobs. Within our services, we have people who require a higher level of support and we are able to provide those supports to them. Our Employment program has grown by 50% over the past 9 months, and we plan to continue to grow these services. For this role, we have been able to hire. There is talk about how staffing is always going to be a need, and while that is true, Reach as a provider, has been able to not only hire, but retain our staff as well. I feel confident that we will be able to continue to do this, even with the staffing shortages that the state is facing. Employment gives people purpose, this is true for those that are receiving our Employment Services, but it is also true for our staff.

As you know, federal law allows businesses to pay people with disabilities less than minimum wage through Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act. More than 3200 people with disabilities in Minnesota legally earn less than minimum wage, and our state – a purported leader in disability rights – employs more people with disabilities earning subminimum wage than any other state in the nation (per capita).

On average, Minnesotans with disabilities who work under 14(c) make just \$4.15 per hour, but some earn as little as 7 cents per hour.

Many people earning subminimum wage are in segregated settings. This contradicts the integration mandate of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which requires that people with disabilities have access to the most integrated settings possible – including employment. Just last year, the United States Department of Justice found that employers who pay less than minimum wage in these segregated settings may be in violation of the ADA.

We urge the Minnesota Senate to support the prohibition of 14(c) certificates as outlined in SF 4399, which will help ensure that all workers with disabilities are paid minimum wage or higher by 2028.

This change is possible. The Minnesota Task Force on Subminimum Wage created a robust transition plan that would make sure no one is left behind in the transition away from 14(c). Service providers that have electively and successfully ended subminimum wage are available to provide technical assistance so other providers remain viable. And just last year, the legislature funded historic investments in individualized, integrated employment programming so all people with disabilities can earn minimum wage in jobs that build on their skills and interests. People who do not want to work will have robust, enriching programming to support their needs during the day.

Minnesota has learned from the sixteen states nationwide that have already passed legislation protecting the rights of people with disabilities to earn minimum wage. It is time for us to follow their lead and live up to our stated commitment to integration, inclusion, belonging, and justice for all Minnesotans. We call on the legislature to support wage equity for all Minnesotans with disabilities now.

Respectfully signed,

Reach for Resources, Inc.

Dear Chair Hoffman and Committee Members,

My name is Raquel Sidie-Wagner, and I'm writing today as both a former member of the Task Force on Eliminating Subminimum Wages and Disability Services Professional to speak to my resounding support of the provisions to phase out the use of subminimum wages in SF4399. It is of the utmost importance that we ensure that all Minnesotans with disabilities are being paid at a wage that's been determined by the work, not a diagnosis.

For the better part of the last decade I worked as a disability services provider managing a multitude of services, including Employment and Day Support Services, and my role on the task force was to represent a provider that successfully ended their use of a 14C, special wage certificate. In 2016, that provider made the decision to let go of the certificate they'd held for many years in order to advance the stated mission of the organization, with no financial or technical support from the state or other organizations, unlike what is included and encouraged in the task force's recommendations.

When I have testified in support of this legislation previously, I have spoken to the fact that that organization made that choice, and the sky didn't fall. In fact, the employment services have thrived ever since.

However, in the hearing room, in your offices, and in the press, there is one thing that is loud and clear: people are afraid. In large part, parents are afraid that their adult children with disabilities will lose access to services, that the work they currently do will no longer be an option, or that their loved one, specifically, will be left behind.

I have sat in dozens and dozens of meetings with parents, guardians, and other providers talking about these exact fears in employment services and otherwise. They are warranted, and based on a lifetime of battling on behalf of their families and the people they serve. But, as providers, legislators, and advocates, it is our job to challenge these fears, and design systems that bring us beyond them, because the current systems, and all of those fears, are consistently holding people back. Those of us in these systems of power need to recognize our own culpability in perpetuating legalized ableism.

When my former employer exited that subminimum wage certificate, the majority of people kept their jobs. 7 of 8 businesses using the certificate chose to maintain their employees. Most people got a pay increase and were allowed to take on tasks they were restricted from when being paid subminimum wage. For the people that lost their jobs in the process they were then offered the chance to work with staff to explore employment ideas and opportunities they'd likely never been offered before. Many people currently being paid subminimum wages in a job have not, in good faith, been given the opportunity to make an informed decision about that work.

Employment services are designed to be individualized and person-centered. They include multiple stages to allow for an exploration of what that person's interests and skills are, the time to prepare for and execute a job search, and the ongoing supports a person needs to be

successful in their employment long term. I have watched countless people be successful through this process despite many barriers.

I have seen someone whose team never believed he'd be able to work not only get and maintain a job, but then be able to move out and live in his own, independent apartment.

I have seen a person whose interests were very specific and difficult to find without extensive education, which was a barrier to them because of their disability, who, with their staff, found a job that met their needs and a volunteer opportunity that fed their passions.

I have seen someone whose physical disability would make it difficult to use the restroom at an employer use the motivation they had to find that meaningful employment to drive them to work hard with a physical therapist and then use the restroom entirely on their own for the first time in their life.

I have watched as businesses changed their outdated thought processes on how to interview, accommodations on the job, and how the work needs to be done and found employees who can do things like monitor barges coming up the Mississippi River all day when they could never find someone to do that work previously.

Employment isn't the answer to all things. People with disabilities should be considered valued members of society even if employment isn't feasible for them, but with the right supports, a job at or above minimum wage is attainable for most people who want one. The reality is, in our current model, the state spends around \$200 million funding these sheltered workshops and spaces that pay subminimum wages, while only spending \$20 million on the employment services that can help people find the meaningful jobs like those listed above. Investing in the excellent staff and providers who walk alongside people in this process is what will assuage the fears of so many families and teams worried that their loved one won't have access to employment or supports.

I ask that all of you support the provisions in the house's bill that phase out subminimum wages in Minnesota. It is well past time to end this outdated and ableist practice, and support people with disabilities in the ways they deserve.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Raquel Sidie-Wagner

March 13, 2024

Re: SF 4399

Chair Hoffman and members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

I am writing in support of Senate File 4399 – specifically the provision prohibiting issuance of 14(c) certificates which authorize payment of subminimum wage to people with disabilities.

I am a mom of a child with a disability, provider of Employment Services, serve on the board of directors for MN APSE, serve on the board of directors for National APSE, in the Coalition for Disability Wage Justice and served on the Task Force to Eliminate Subminimum Wage in Minnesota.

I truly believe that the time is now to eliminate subminimum wage within the state. There are 16 other states that have gone before us to complete this, and if Minnesota wants to pride ourselves on being an example for other states to be able to follow, this step needs to take place. It can't wait any longer. The Taskforce developed a plan as to how to complete this, and ICI Minnesota has been working with providers for the past two years doing this work. There are the 10 elements of provider transformation to utilize and each provider can work with ICI to develop this and complete this work in a way that will work for them as a provider. Each provider is at a different place beginning this work, and this plan allows for that.

As you know, federal law allows businesses to pay people with disabilities less than minimum wage through Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act. More than 3200 people with disabilities in Minnesota legally earn less than minimum wage, and our state – a purported leader in disability rights – employs more people with disabilities earning subminimum wage than any other state in the nation (per capita).

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Many people earning subminimum wage are in segregated settings. This contradicts the integration mandate of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which requires that people with disabilities have access to the most integrated settings possible – including employment. Just last year, the United States Department of Justice found that employers who pay less than minimum wage in these segregated settings may be in violation of the ADA.

We urge the Minnesota Senate to support the prohibition of 14(c) certificates as outlined in SF 4399, which will help ensure that all workers with disabilities are paid minimum wage or higher by 2028.

This change is possible. The Minnesota Task Force on Subminimum Wage created a robust transition plan that would make sure no one is left behind in the transition away from 14(c). Service providers that have electively and successfully ended subminimum wage are available to provide technical assistance so other providers remain viable. And just last year, the legislature funded historic investments in individualized, integrated employment programming so all people with disabilities can earn minimum wage in jobs that build on their skills and interests. People who do not want to work will have robust, enriching programming to support their needs during the day.

Minnesota has learned from the sixteen states nationwide that have already passed legislation protecting the rights of people with disabilities to earn minimum wage. It is time for us to follow their lead and live up to our stated commitment to integration, inclusion, belonging, and justice for all Minnesotans. We call on the legislature to support wage equity for all Minnesotans with disabilities now.

Respectfully signed,

Larissa Beck

TO: Senate Human Services Committee
RE: Subminimum Wage Testimony on SF 4399
March 12, 2024

Chair Hoffman and Committee Members,

My name is Addison Loerzel. I am writing to testify in support of the provisions to phase out subminimum wage in SF 4399.

I was really sad when I found out that people with disabilities often get paid less money than those who don't have disabilities. My entire life, I have had to work really hard - sometimes harder than you, and rarely get to achieve the same level of success. This is wrong.

Even though I have shown myself to be a hard worker, there is still a chance that I might make a subminimum wage because society continues to believe that people with disabilities are helpless, unable to complete meaningful work, and don't really care about the size of their paychecks. This way of thinking is false!

When a person finds a job that matches their interests, skills, and supports, you will see them **thrive**! You will watch them blossom into a confident, accomplished, and valued employee. And this idea that people with disabilities don't really care about money is ridiculous. The majority of us do! We want to have hobbies and enjoy leisure time. We want to go on vacation, have nice clothes, and pay our bills. What does that take? **Money**! Come on! Of course we care about the size of our paychecks!

What if I was your daughter? Do you think this would be fair? I have friends that are older than me and some are starting to explore career options. Do you want to know some of their choices? Cleaning hotel rooms, cleaning restaurants, and cleaning stores. Cleaning can be a great job and it is very important but what if that was your only choice? Would you like that? Would you like it if somebody stood over your shoulder with a stop watch to time your work, at a job that you probably didn't even choose, and calculated your wage...your **worth (!)** based on a 60 minute snap shot of time?

That is not what I want for my future...and most people with disabilities would agree. I have goals, dreams, and passions just like other kids my age. I want to go to college and learn how to be a better cook. I want to open my own restaurant or bakery and make people happy with my food. I want to contribute to my local community and economy and help others who want careers in food service.

I hope you will look at me, and others like me, and see us for our worth. Please see my strengths and contributions. Stop focusing on what I **can't** do and listen to me when I tell you what I **can** do! Please vote to end subminimum wage.

Thank you.

March 12th, 2024

Mr. Chair and members of the Human Services Committee considering SF 4399:

My name is Hunter Cantrell, I am a former state representative and former PCA/direct support staff where I served people with disabilities for several years. I have also had the pleasure of working with many of the committee members on groundbreaking and historic pieces of legislation to support and uplift Minnesotans with disabilities—your ongoing commitment to which I am eternally grateful.

I write this letter in strong support of the provision in SF 4399 that will phase out the inherently discriminatory sub-minimum wage in the state of Minnesota. When section 14C of the Fair Labor Standards Act was enacted in the late 1930s—permitting the compensation of people with disabilities less than minimum wage based on productivity measurements—it was meant only as a transitional bridge from the dark days of mass institutionalization of people with disabilities to foster greater workplace integration. Even at the time it was passed, it was meant to only be a temporary measure. Nearly a century later, people with disabilities in Minnesota are still being deprived of equity and fair pay in the workplace as there are still thousands of people in our state who are being paid a subminimum wage.

People living with disabilities in Minnesota face exorbitant rates of poverty because our system is still set up in many ways to exclude them from equitable and just treatment in our society, to which they are, and in fact, we all are, entitled by virtue of our shared humanity. When I carried a bill to phase out the subminimum wage in 2020, we had a number of people with disabilities, advocates, disability service providers, and unions testify and write letters in support of this prohibition so that no Minnesotan is treated like a second-class citizen in their workplace. As mentioned by Kaposia and a number of other supporters in the very moving letters of support they have submitted in previous committee hearings on this topic—including

letters from the Minnesota AFL-CIO and the Arc—phasing out the sub-minimum wage is one essential step in the right direction towards fully integrating people with disabilities into our workforce, and doing so will not shutter businesses or sheltered workshops with 14C waivers, rather such a just transition is good for worker prosperity and the growth of these businesses alike. I understand there is apprehension and trepidation on behalf of families and businesses, and I would never want to see someone lose their opportunity to participate in the workplace. I am confident though that all parties can come together to find a well structured path forward in which no Minnesotan is left behind and their economic stability is well secured.

This is fundamentally a civil rights issue, people's jaws drop when I tell them that their loved ones living with a disability can be paid less than minimum wage—which isn't exactly a living wage in and of itself—solely because they have a disability, and that their pay can be linked to timed productivity measurements to which their co-workers doing the same job who do not have disabilities are not subjected. The subminimum wage is fundamentally demeaning to dignity in the workplace and our economy.

There is a sense of urgency around this policy action. Over a dozen states have either phased out their subminimum wage laws or have experienced court rulings striking down their subminimum wage laws because of the aspects of wage and workplace discrimination inherent in them; including the rampant wage theft that often accompanies subminimum wages. If a court were to strike down our subminimum wage law with immediate effect, as happened in Oregon and which is very possible in Minnesota as well, such a decision would be profoundly destabilizing for people with disabilities. Given this reality, the legislature should take this opportunity to implement a thoughtful phase-out away from the subminimum wage to ensure a just transition and the ultimate prohibition of a practice that has no place in a modern Minnesota in which we uphold the rights of all workers.

In closing, I thank the committee for your consideration, and I urge support of the subminimum wage phase out. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said, "No work is insignificant. All

labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance...” Let Minnesota ensure all workers are compensated fairly for their labor and that none are deprived of such dignity. Thank you, members of the committee and Chair Hoffman for your consideration and continued diligent work towards uplifting Minnesotans with disabilities.

Modernize Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division statutes

Date: March 13, 2024

To: Senate Human Services
Sen. John Hoffman, Chair
Sen. Omar Fateh, Vice Chair

From: Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, DeafBlind & Hard of Hearing

Please support modernizing DHHS statutes – SF4399

Our mission here at the Commission closely aligns with that of the Department of Human Services' Deaf and Hard of Hearing Division, except that we focus on system change while they provide direct support with individual advocacy and oversee grants serving this population. We serve the same stakeholders and often refer people to DHHS when they need support with individual advocacy. Because of this, we call them our "sister agency."

We fully support the changes requested by our sister agency in SF4399 to better align their statutes with the invaluable services they provide to improve the quality of life for deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing Minnesotans.

Some wording changes may seem subtle to those not within our community, but they are meaningful and affirming of the empowering cultural and linguistic identities our community has built over many decades. For example, they have long served deafblind members of our community, and the updated wording affirms that this population has its own distinct identity and needs worthy of recognition. This recognition in turn will set a powerful example for other agencies to follow in serving the deafblind community.

Overall, these seemingly small changes send a powerful message of solidarity and invite increased trust from our mutual stakeholders. We are pleased that our sister agency is taking those steps, and we invite you to support them by adopting their provisions in SF4399.

Signed,



Alicia Lane, Government Relations Director

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.

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

Jay Wilson
891 West Berwood Avenue
Vadnais Heights, MN 55127
Jay.Wilson.ATP@gmail.com

March 11, 2024

Dear committee,

I am writing to support the Minnesota-grown movement of people with disabilities and allies seeking to end sub-minimum wage exceptions for Minnesota workers with disabilities. No worker should be paid less than the minimum. This subminimum wage system traps people in poverty based on disability status, which is discriminatory.

As a disabled person who has the privilege of higher education and competitive employment, I also see how racism, classism, and lack of access lead to disproportionate marginalization of disabled people who have intellectual disabilities and people who are experiencing multiple marginalization.

I have seen from both family members and community members working in subminimum wage how subminimum wage impacts how we value people with disabilities in the community, their choices for housing, the economy at large, and self-worth.

I am impressed by the thoughtful work that advocates have been arranging to ensure that employment opportunities do not decrease for disabled people. I am encouraged by the states and businesses that made this change years ago, having recently lived in New Hampshire for a year before returning to Minnesota.

Please consider how Minnesota can show its commitment to all citizens, including people with disabilities, who enrich our state. Pay workers what the government has agreed should be the minimum.

I appreciate your consideration,

Jay Wilson



March 1, 2024

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing in support of the Governor's plan to phase out subminimum wage included in SF 4399. People with disabilities deserve the same wage protections as anyone else. This bill will eliminate a process that was designed in 1938 and has long since used up its usefulness.

Kaposia phased out our use of 14(c) certificates 15 years ago. Since that time, we have expanded our business and continue to receive record number of referrals. None of our customers are unhappy with being paid minimum wage or more.

In addition, we have provided technical assistance to many other providers around the state. Nearly 20 of them have either transitioned away from their 14(c) certificates or are in the process of doing so. None of them are at risk of closing their doors and no person served has lost their supports.

The opposition will tell you this is going to ruin people's lives. How exactly does living the American dream ruin someone's life? It doesn't.

Please vote to support SF 4399.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon Alexander', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jon Alexander

Chief Executive Officer

LAKE GEORGE FOSTER HOMES, LLC/HARMONY KNOWLES

321 9th Ave South Saint Cloud, MN 56301 | 320-224-2192 (office) 320-253-1348 (Fax) |
LGFHomes@gmail.com |

MARCH 11TH 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN,

I am writing to express the importance of individuals with disability having the same rights as individuals without disability as it pertains to Minimum wage.

For over 21 years I have worked with individuals receiving supportive living services, emergency services, intensive residential services, and community services. Throughout the years I have always believed that all individuals with disability should be at minimum wage, for any employment.

There are some companies that have taken changes necessary and successfully made changes with supported employment minimum wage. This needs to be of equal option across the entire state, not just to certain work sites and supported services.

Working so closely with populations of disability, I see the difference in desire and drive to do successful production when the individuals I serve are making minimum wage. It also opens competitive employment for some who may not otherwise get this opportunity. I serve some individuals that do not have a drive to be employed because they would not be starting at minimum wage. This sets up an unfair precedent to drive success and creates failure. Companies seem to also express the willingness to pay higher wages to support people with disability achieve minimum wage.

In the area of being a provider, I see open opportunity to allocate the transfer of funds from one area of services to another, to created added support to a minimum wage law for people with disability.

It is overdue time we look at NOT supporting unfair prejudice and we provide successful options in supporting stability and consistency of a minimum wage law for people with disability.

Sincerely,
Harmony Knowles
Administrator

Date: March 12, 2024 at 11:59:48 AM CDT

Subject: Minimum wage

March 11, 2024

Dear Committee,

I am writing in support of the elimination of sub-minimum wage in Minnesota. As the parent of an adult child with significant disabilities, and a veteran vocational counselor with over 35 years of experience working with youth and adults around employment, I can understand both sides of the concerns around this issue. There is no justification for paying adults with disabilities less money per hour without admitting you think of them as inferior humans.

I have observed and engaged with many individuals who have been stuck in sheltered work settings for years. When given the chance to try work in the community, they performed well. Some individuals have been in sheltered work for 20 years, and have matured, gained skills over time, and no one notices the personal growth, until a family member or case manager suggests considering a job search. If a person is attending a Workshop, working should not be mandatory, it should be a choice.

One of the big problems with our system is very few people have been taught how to teach individuals with significant disabilities job tasks. Task Analysis is used in our Spec Ed system to teach new tasks to students. But that evidence-based practice is rarely used working with adults. Most job coaches have no specialized training. They just point, use voice commands, or show the person how to do the task. Unfortunately, the job coaches build themselves into the process, so when the coach steps away, the process falls apart and then we say the person cannot work.

Many people who have significant disabilities may need more support to learn a job or stay on the job. However, choosing a job that is a good fit for the person with a disability can really reduce the impact their disability has on work speed, performance, and mood. Often, participants in a sheltered settings are stuck in jobs that are available, not good fits or aligned with skills, and then staff complain the person needs a lot of support to get tasks done, and they are grouchy and have a bad attitude. If I had to do a job I did not enjoy and was not good at, I would be grouchy, too.

In Minnesota, the minimum wage is \$8.85 for small employers and \$10.85 for large employers, neither is a huge amount. We need to stop timing people doing jobs that are probably not good fits for them, to determine their wage per hour. I once worked with a gentleman who had the use of one arm, and he was timed doing his Workshop job. He earned 18 cents an hour. A year later he was earning around 16.00 an hour working in a store using his computer skills.

No one should be paid less than minimum wage. Some Workshops have already been able to make the transition to paying participants a fair wage. It's not rocket science! We need to pay people with disabilities at least minimum wage, we need to train job coaches and other staff on evidence practices supporting individuals with significant disabilities in the workplace, and we need to be more person-centered.

Thank you for allowing me to give input.

Sincerely,

Abbie Wells-Herzog
651-231-4980

Tuesday March 12, 2024

To: Senate Human Services Committee

Re: Senate File 4399

Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify to ensure people with disabilities are paid at least the minimum wage or higher in the state of Minnesota, where wage justice is a strongly held value and included in our Employment First Policy. My name is Brian Begin, and I work at the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration on a project called the Minnesota Transformation Initiative, or MTI.

In the past 2 years, with MTI's support, 4 providers have relinquished their 14c, 3 will be doing so at the end of this month, and 1 plans to end paying subminimum wages by the end of the year. These 8 providers have all completed a robust transition plan with support from MTI. No one has lost services because of their provider's transformation, rather, individuals are receiving employment and day support services that they haven't had access to before. All providers have developed plans for a sustainable business model that does not rely on subminimum wages and none have expressed concern about their ability to stay open.

The Minnesota state legislature has made funding available for the foreseeable future to continue the work to help service providers with this powerful, equitable transformation.

There is not a "one size fits all" plan to this work. The technical assistance MTI provides looks different for every provider. We visit the organization, meet with their leadership, we learn about their service model, and then work together to build their transition plan.

MTI provides extensive, impactful trainings on a range of topics related to expanding community employment and organizational transformation. We also support peer mentorship opportunities by connecting providers that are in the process of ending payment of subminimum wages with those who have successfully made the transition and are providing community employment services.

ICI strongly supports the plan to ensure wage justice in Minnesota and pay all people with disabilities the minimum wage or higher.

Brian C Begin

Education Program Specialist

University of Minnesota – Institute on Community Integration

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". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with a long, sweeping underline.

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



Dear Committee,

The Autism Society supports the Governors Policy bill provision to guarantee minimum wage for people with disabilities. As you know, AuSM has been committed to this work since the beginning and has been integrally involved with the task force and legislative work creating historic investments towards preparing providers to make the transition.

We know that this change comes with many emotions and a universe of new things. But we also trust in the work that the task force has done to help the legislature prepare our state for a fruitful outcome for all people with disabilities. Minnesota has always been a pillar in greatness for the disability community, being years ahead in special ed provisions, in service options, and in human rights and equitable living. This is the next stage of that.

Just as there was uncertainty and controversy when Minnesota committed to closing institutions, Minnesota demonstrated the high level of community standards to ensure our community was successful. People with disabilities now thrive in our community and contribute to the greatness of this state.

We have prepared with the same commitment to excellence to leave behind the antiquated practice of sub-minimum wage. Through the greatness of our community and our legislatures. We are prepared for this step. Please support Guaranteeing Minimum Wage for People with Disabilities through a sunset date for section 14C.

Jillian Nelson

Community Resource and Policy Advocate

Minnesota's First Autism Resource®

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March 17,2024

Chair Hoffman and Senate Human Service Committee Members:

Hello I am Dana and I have a disability. My work story is this: I worked with four people with disabilities (an enclave) in Rochester at a hotel. I cleaned rooms and staff were there too. I liked my job and I liked going to work but it was hard work. When I started I was paid less than \$3 per hour. I tried hard and thought when I learned the work I would get paid more. I did work my way up to over \$3.35. After several year working, I lost interest and it got harder to work. One day staff said I was too slow and they lowered my pay to almost \$2 per hour. I didn't want to work anymore.

I wanted to try something different in my town but my staff didn't believe I had the skills to work at a real job. So, I left. Through COVID I stayed home until Vocational Rehab was able to do in person meetings and I learned what other jobs I might be able to try. Michelle (my new staff) helped me find a new job in Rochester at the Hilton Garden Hotel. I like working with them and they pay me \$12.50 per hour. I started with cleaning rooms and it was hard. Michelle and my hotel supervisor customized my job to cleaning hallways and other areas of the hotel and it is going better. I work with all the housekeeping staff. I am a regular employee. Because the hotel was slow, my job ended.

Next week I will start a new job at St. Mary's Hospital working Monday-Friday 9-1 and I will earn \$10.85 per hour. I will have the support of a job coach and while I will be making less per hour than my last job, it's still minimum wage. I need that pay as my rent went up and the HRA will only pay so much. I pay all my bills and try not to use public dollars when I don't have too. I am a proud person.

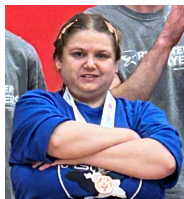
I deserved to be paid for my work like other people. Please support paying people with disabilities like me. I support of the provisions in SF 4399 to increase wages for people with disabilities by phasing out subminimum wage in Minnesota. People with disabilities like me support this provision. We matter and deserve to be paid.

Thank you,

Dana

Dana Wiersma

Rochester, MN



Dear Chair and Committee members,

I have been a Minnesota citizen for over twenty of my forty-one years and since 2005 I have worked in social services, representing people whose voices have not traditionally been heard. I write you today from my own personal perspective and I represent no organizations, but I cannot deny that my twenty years of experience in social services including working with diverse populations of color and different cultures, people experiencing homelessness, people living with HIV, people dealing with substances, and people dealing with mental health crises does not inform my view. My whole career I have worked with people who have been seen as less than human in some way. I have seen a lot of movement in some of these areas throughout my career and life. Some backwards and some negative but I do believe that we have moved in a positive direction in terms of seeing people as people even if we have a negative view of them. I was disappointed when I learned that we have not moved forward as a state in this way when it comes to people with disabilities. To judge the value of someone's work based on something like disability status is not even the echo of eugenics and the 3/5th compromise. It's the literal evolution of those concepts being applied to the last population of people that we can get away with it. In every instance of American history in which we have tried to push forward, we have run up against real fears of people who are afraid to lose what they have in order to gain what seems impossible. My mother grew up as a black woman in segregation in the south and the parents of some of her fellow students in the sixties were against ending segregation because they were afraid that it would increase negative outcomes for their children. Today we see parents that are afraid to lose the support and income that their children do have. However, that choice is false, and they have been misled. We can both provide support and hold ourselves to a higher standard in terms of ethics. Where would we be had we listened to our fears in the past? As scary as it is you cannot sail to new adventures while still standing on the shores of "It's always been this way". For these reasons "I support the provisions in HF 4392 to increase wages for people with disabilities by phasing out subminimum wage in Minnesota". I hope that I can count on you to make the right choice in this matter and make history in a positive way.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JSM', with a stylized, cursive-like flow.

Jacorey SkottMyhre
Saint Paul, MN

I am writing to express my strong support for ensuring that disabled individuals receive at least minimum wage for their work. I firmly believe that fair compensation is essential in empowering individuals with disabilities to lead independent and fulfilling lives.

It is disheartening to acknowledge that many disabled individuals are often paid below minimum wage under sub-minimum wage laws, perpetuating inequality and exploitation. These individuals possess valuable skills, talents, and contributions that deserve to be recognized and compensated fairly.

Paying disabled workers at least minimum wage not only promotes economic justice but also fosters dignity, self-worth, and inclusion within our society. It enables individuals with disabilities to support themselves financially, pursue their aspirations, and participate fully in their communities.

As we strive for a more equitable and inclusive society, it is imperative that we advocate for policies and practices that uphold the rights and dignity of all individuals, regardless of their abilities.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Andi Otto (he/him)

Executive Director | Twin Cities Pride

andi.otto@tcpride.org

March 17, 2024

Chair Hoffman and Senate Human Services Committee Member:

I am writing in support of the provisions in SF 4399 to increase wages for people with disabilities by phasing out subminimum wage in Minnesota. Making these changes in wages will demonstrate Minnesota's commitment and belief to our fellow Minnesotan's with disabilities that there is equality and value to their work and lives in our communities.

Certainly, we know the subminimum wage system that was created years ago was based on a system that did not believe people with disabilities could work. Today, we know that is not true. As the great state of Minnesota has grown and has developed person-centered services, we've learned our fellow citizens with disabilities have great skills and abilities just like you and I. They are valued and needed members of the workforce. With the right supports in place, people can work and employers need and want people to work.

In 2003 Accord discontinued the use of its 14c certificate because we believed people could work and deserved to work and be paid fairly. Today, we support individuals who are exploring careers and working in their community. We also support people who utilize day supports as part of their day to volunteer, for art and music enrichment and have other community involvement. People with disabilities can, do and should have options within their day. This can be done without the use of subminimum wage. Several organizations within Minnesota's systems have been able to make this transfer and Accord is happy to partner or mentor any organization to do so.

Accord believes the provisions in SF 4399 will support providers to transform programming to meet peoples' needs while paying at least minimum wage and enabling people to continue to have choice in their work and community lives. The growing support for this nationally makes this the right time for Minnesota to move forward on our commitment. Let's invest in people and strengthen our services to better support people and Minnesota's Employment First movement.

Sincerely,

Rita Wiersma

Rita Wiersma, CEO



Dear Committee,

The Autism Society supports the Governors Policy bill provision to guarantee minimum wage for people with disabilities and strongly opposed the amendment introduced last week.

As you know, AuSM has been committed to this work since the beginning and has been integrally involved with the task force and legislative work creating historic investments towards preparing providers to make the transition.

We know that this change comes with many emotions and a universe of new things. But we also trust in the work that the task force has done to help the legislature prepare our state for a fruitful outcome for all people with disabilities. Minnesota has always been a pillar in greatness for the disability community, being years ahead in special ed provisions, in service options, and in human rights and equitable living. This is the next stage of that.

Just as there was uncertainty and controversy when Minnesota committed to closing institutions, Minnesota demonstrated the high level of community standards to ensure our community was successful. People with disabilities now thrive in our community and contribute to the greatness of this state.

If we assume people cannot succeed, they will not succeed. Our assumptions will become reality. But if we assume there is possibility and that they can, we give those assumptions the potential to become reality.

[Please watch this video.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HpLhxMFJR8) It may change your perception about who these workers are. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HpLhxMFJR8>

Minnesota's First Autism Resource®

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As a member of the task force, we contemplated creating a step by step plan as part of our report, but we were also tasked with listening to community stake holders including providers. When asked what they would need in a plan to successfully move from sub minimum wage to minimum wage and/or customized employment the answer was remarkably unanimous. FLEXIBILITY.

Providers reported that they needed support and flexibility to adjust to their own timeline and choose their own pathway to create this change. That is why the task force made the recommendations they did, including technical assistance that would embrace mentorship, education for families and case managers and data tracking. This was the plan. So that each provider could find their own journey and their own individual transformation. BECAUSE THIS IS WHAT THEY ASKED FOR. This is also the plan that the legislature chose to fund in 2023. The idea that there is no plan illegitimizes the work that the legislature committed state funding to in 2023 because this work is in fact the plan that was laid out by the task force.

We have prepared with the same commitment to excellence to leave behind the antiquated practice of sub-minimum wage. Through the greatness of our community and our legislatures. We are prepared for this step. Please support Guaranteeing Minimum Wage for People with Disabilities through a sunset date for section 14C.

Jillian Nelson

Community Resource and Policy Advocate

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