

Opposition to SF2149

March 9, 2025

Madam Chair and Members of the Labor Committee:

My son Joe works at the East Range Day Achievement Center in Eveleth. This is a 14c organization that provides prevocational training to adults with substantial to severe intellectual and developmental disabilities. They employ 84 people and another 27 direct support professionals (all members of the Steelworkers Union). Along with community based jobs, ERDAC also operates an on campus gift shop. My son makes braided rugs in the morning, and a variety of hand crafted items in the afternoon including bird houses and painted pine cone wreaths. Joe started work at ERDAC after a miserably failed effort to find him employment in the community through the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act.

He works five days a week. His transportation is provided. He has compassionate and skilled staff assisting him. He has friends and a social network. **Most importantly, he has work that is meaningful to him.** This job is a critical part of his person centered plan.

If ERDAC is required to pay minimum wage, as would be mandated in SF2149, they would cease to exist. They do not have a magic pot of money from which to draw these wages. I suspect Joe would go from doing work he loves to playing bingo.

I want you to know that ARC MN does not speak for Joe. Neither does the Minnesota Disability Law Center or the Minnesota Autism Society. They do not want Joe and others like him to be visible on this issue because he does not fit their “vision”. The people who have substantial to severe I/DD, along with their parents and guardians who often must speak for them, have been deliberately left out of discussions regarding 14c employment.

Should this bill pass, ARC MN, the Minnesota Disability Law Center, and the Minnesota Autism Society will pat themselves on the back. My son, and 83 others with substantial to severe I/DD at ERDAC will carry the burden of their victory for a very long time.

I am Joe's advocate. I am angry. The saddest part is that the Minnesota Legislature is more willing to listen to advocacy groups, funded by my tax dollars, instead of constituents, who have said time and time again that they do not want this change.

We need a seat at the table to formulate policies that impact our families on a daily basis.

I strongly urge you to vote no on SF 2149.

Thank you.

Jeanne Prittinen
Eveleth, MN