



March 10, 2025

The Honorable Jennifer A. McEwen  
Chair, Labor Committee  
Minnesota Senate  
3217 Minnesota Senate Bldg.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Gene Dornik  
Ranking Minority Member, Labor Committee  
Minnesota Senate  
3411 Minnesota Senate Bldg.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

**Re: Legal Aid/Minnesota Disability Law Center Letter of Support for SF 2149**

Dear Chair McEwen, Ranking Minority Member Dornik, and Members of the Committee:

The Legal Services Advocacy Project and the Minnesota Disability Law Center write in support of SF 2149, which phases out the practice of paying employees with disabilities less than the minimum wage by August 1, 2028.

Nationwide, 12% of people with disabilities earn less than the minimum wage, but in Minnesota it is 44%. Minnesota is also far behind the national average in employing people with disabilities in integrated settings. Current research supports shifting to integrated employment services, finding that it leads to better outcomes across employment, health, and independence compared to segregated employment.

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights issued a report calling for an end to Section 14(c) employment in 2020.<sup>1</sup> In the report, the Commission found that these programs were limiting people with disabilities from “realizing their full potential while allowing providers and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.usccr.gov/files/2020/2020-09-17-Subminimum-Wages-Report.pdf>

associated businesses to profit from their labor.” The report called for states to phase out these programs and, instead, invest in meaningful employment and placement services.

In the last biennium, the Minnesota legislature funded resources and technical assistance for 14(c) employment providers to shift their business models, stop paying people with disabilities less than the minimum wage, and ensure financial viability going forward. However, the Minnesota legislature declined to end the subminimum wage. We urge you to take that step now.

It is important to note two things: 1) Help that was funded in the last biennium still exists for current subminimum wage providers to transition to paying workers at least minimum wage; and 2) Many providers in Minnesota that have chosen to end their 14(c) certifications and pay their employees at least minimum wage have been able to continue to serve people with physical, intellectual, and development disabilities without a loss of jobs.

Minnesota can and should do better for people with disabilities and support employment services over funding subminimum wage employment. This has been done and can continue to be done by investing in the right services and supports. Minnesota must live up to the tenets of *Olmstead* and Employment First to ensure that people with disabilities are working in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs. We can build a more just and supportive employment network for people with disabilities that does not rely on segregation and poverty wages. Please support this bill.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Purrington  
Legal Director/Deputy Director  
Minnesota Disability Law Center



Ellen Smart  
Staff Attorney  
Legal Services Advocacy Project

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