

To Minnesota Senate Labor Committee Members,

I am writing to urge your vote in favor of phasing out the unfair practice of paying subminimum wages to workers with disabilities. As an organizational consultant and professional that has worked in the disability advocacy and employment space for more than five decades, I offer testimony that this practice is both outdated and unnecessary. I would like to make these important points for your consideration:

1. Department of Labor policy requires a universal standard and protection for workers to ensure they are paid fairly for their labor. The term minimum means **the least**. No other minority group would tolerate earning subminimum wages for their work contributions.
2. Arguments advanced by opponents of the proposal to eliminate payment of subminimum wages **do not** translate to significant job loss, agency closures, or displacement of people in services; rather, service providers that modernize their business model and adopt contemporary service practices are succeeding in transforming job outcomes and wages as well as increasing social inclusion.
3. Technical assistance is readily available to organizations that can benefit from guided consultation to transform their business plan, policies, and service practices.
4. A growing number of service providers in all regions of Minnesota have already demonstrated with success that eliminating the payment of subminimum wages is possible when adopting a new business model.
5. Section 14 c of the Fair Labor Standards Act was enacted in 1938 and during a time when evidence-based practices and assistive technologies were unavailable to plan and support people with disabilities in living their best life.
6. Minnesota's Employment First Policy does not mean employment only; there is a vision and strategic plan to support people choosing to work part-time as well as others that choose alternative community engagements that are matched to their interests.
7. The timeframe for implementation of a changed policy is both generous and attainable.

Finally, 16 states have now banned the payment of subminimum wages and 13 states have specifically abolished the use of 14 c certificates that enable this practice. The appointed time has arrived to value fairness and the work contributions of Minnesotans living with disabilities. Please vote in support of this change. Minnesotans living with disabilities are counting on us.

Respectfully submitted,

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