

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.

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