

Who we are:

The Minnesota Coalition for Disability Wage Justice is a collaborative effort by people with disabilities, their families, and organizations and are a voice advocating for people across Minnesota with disabilities. In 2021 the Minnesota Legislature set up the Task Force on Eliminating Subminimum Wages by August 1, 2025. Being person-centered and ensuring informed choice are core concepts that motivated the legislature to create the task force. These concepts remain a key factor in our recommendations.

Elimination of subminimum wage by 2025:

The bill includes the following strategies that were identified and supported by the task force

- Lead Agency Employment Capacity-Building Grants;
- Required Case Manager Employment Training;
- Funding for a statewide Disability Employment Technical Assistance Center;
- Embedded employment resources in MnCHOICES Assessment and Support Plan;
- Policy changes to informed choice laws;
- Phasing out the use of subminimum wages for people with disabilities;
- Interagency alignment study and data sharing;
- Administrative resources to establish transition age youth supports coordinator and additional support for employment programs;
- Removal of a work disincentive from Minnesota Supplemental Aid (MSA);
- Enhanced system to track outcomes for people being paid subminimum wage;
- Disability inclusive worksite training and certification; and
- Creation of a preferred contractor designation for disability inclusive worksites for the State of Minnesota.

There are many organizations in Minnesota that have ended their use of subminimum wages and are successfully providing competitive employment supports or are in the process of ending their use of subminimum wages. There are also many organizations nationwide and even whole states that have ended the use of subminimum wages. We know it is possible, but we also know it requires aligning resources correctly. We need to invest in integrated employment supports to make them more widely and readily available.

Supporting Organizations:



Person-centered, fulfilling employment:

Minnesota is an Employment First State. That means we have the expectation that people with disabilities can work in competitive integrated employment and our public supports help people meet their competitive employment goals – regardless of disability status. We believe the right job is out there, we just have to be creative and hard working to find it! **When we pay people subminimum wages, we are saying we do not value their work enough to pay even the minimum of what is legally acceptable to pay others.**



A historic over reliance on subminimum wages has created limited employment options for people with disabilities concentrated in few industries (light manufacturing, cleaning, etc.). Moving to competitive wages pushes our system to support people on individualized employment paths that finds what is important to them and what they like to do with their days and build a career around it.

In addition to increasing the size of paychecks, moving to competitive employment also improves the quality of the job fit. Employment is not just about having any amount of income. Employment is about contributing through our unique skills and strengths to our community/society and earning the resources each of us needs to live our best life. **As a society, we are placing low value on the contributions people with disabilities make every day they work.**

“But what about...”

Current Jobs and Day Programming:

People in work and day programs currently can continue their same programming, we simply want this work done for at least minimum wage pay. This bill does not decrease options for those in other programs but merely expands options to be explored by those looking to work in customized competitive fields.

Providers:

To support a successful transition in greater Minnesota, the task force recommends strengthening access to transportation supports, developing a technical assistance program to help providers move their business models to using competitive wages, and creating a grant program for counties (lead agencies) as well as changes to case management services to improve support planning for competitive employment.

Thanks to our Chief Authors:

Representative Jessica Hanson
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