

March 30, 2022

Dear Chair Jennifer Schultz and members of the Human Service Finance and Policy Committee,

My brother Ted is severely disabled, intellectually. He lives as a Ward of the State in a group home managed by Lake Owasso Residence (LOR) in Shoreview Minnesota, an Intermediate Care Facility (ICF).

What should be important for you to know about Ted is that he is employed in a 14(c) job through Merrick, Inc. This job means everything to my brother. It is his social life he looks forward to everyday. It is his self-worth. He saves his money for the one big carrot he looks forward to every Summer: his one-week vacation to the Wisconsin Dells.

Without this day program job, Ted would be home watching TV all day.

If your Human Service Policy Committee advises to eliminate the sub minimum wage provision of 14(c), businesses like Merrick will fold, because they cannot sustain their employees (my brother) with the higher wage standard. We have seen this happen already in other states where the sub minimum wage provision of 14(c) has been dissolved. Businesses providing a unique service that employ severely disabled citizens no longer operate there.

As President of the Family Group of Lake Owasso Residence, I not only represent Ted, but I am the voice of the Residents living at LOR, who cannot speak for themselves._

Allow me to say this loud and clear, their voice is not being represented by ARC of MN, the MN Disability Law Center, and the MN Autism Society.

I am humbly asking that you and your committee:

Support HF4071

- It modifies the task force purpose to a more positive direction of planning future employment opportunities for disabled people. It does not assume elimination of any work option.
- It gives people like my brother, Ted and residents of LOR, a voice in planning work options.

Please honor the freedom of choice that is my brother's right, as to where he may work and live.

Thank you so much in giving my words your consideration.

Michael Golben
LOR Family Group
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