



Written Testimony

The Autism Society of Minnesota strongly supports the passage of HF439

My name is Jillian Nelson- I am the community resource and policy advocate for the Autism Society of Minnesota, as well as a member of both the Governor's Council of Developmental Disabilities and the State Rehabilitation Council. And prior to my current job, I was an employment consultant for adults with disabilities. I am also an autistic adult. I am here to ask you to support this legislation. We believe THE ELIMINATION OF SUBMINIMUM WAGE IS INEVITABLE--The Question is: Will Minnesota be prepared?

This bill gives our state the time and resources to prepare for a drastic shift in employment culture. Let me be clear--if we do not plan, if we do not coordinate, over 5,000 individuals will be left without work, without community engagement, without meaningful connection to their community.

Throughout the country, Subminimum wage is being eliminated at a rapid rate; however it's not always being done with appropriate planning, which is devastating for individuals and the families that support them with lack of programs and services.

As we eliminate subminimum wage, families and providers may tell you that there is nowhere else for people who use these programs to go. We are listening; we hear you. Change is hard. And it's even more difficult when we don't know for sure what we are changing TO.

But the disability services community is already shifting to Community based employment- both competitively and customized.

Minnesota's First Autism Resource®

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Community based employment allows an individual to CHOOSE where they want to work, to engage their passions and interests, to do work that is meaningful to them. Competitive employment, means being hired for the same job at the same pay rate as nondisabled employees and doing the job with or without supports.

Customized employment is the process of looking at business needs and the employees' abilities and finding the place where they meet! Often, customized employment can increase business productivity by removing a task or tasks from one job description and allowing someone to focus on just those things, which frees up capacity for other employees to do tasks specialized to their roles that cannot be as easily delegated.

A third type of support is needed for individuals with disabilities who choose NOT to work. Volunteering or working on personal goals like better health and fitness are activities that the nondisabled population is able to choose. We need to provide a similar array of options for people with disabilities.

This legislation will allow Minnesota to transition adult support services in a way that allows the most dignity and respect for people with disabilities and costs Minnesota the least, because I promise you, individuals without jobs or other activities will require more financial investment than those who are supported doing what they choose.

In summary, I want to emphasize the importance of **maintaining community supports and services** while also **making sure that people with disabilities have the same rights** as non-disabled peers in employment.

Our transition needs to focus on working with all stakeholders, including individuals with disabilities, their families, and service providers, to **make plans and changes to safely**

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autism society of minnesota

phase out subminimum wage with the least disruption to the lives of people being served and maintaining programs that are serving the community in line with person-centered guidelines.

We believe the disability community has the ability to come together to develop new ideas, improve existing programs, and keep the goals of all persons with disabilities, with all levels of support needs, at the center of our conversations, ensuring that everyone in the community is afforded the ability to thrive.

This task force is designed to create a plan to allow the programs and opportunities that are so loved to exist, and giving them tools to change business models to allow the people who want to be there to continue to be there- we are just asking to make a plan to serve this community in the most equitable way before the clock runs out and the courts or federal government take that choice away from Minnesota. Every testifier will tell you that this is about choice, whether they support or oppose this bill. Please support HF439 so that MINNESOTA has a choice in how to navigate this inevitable change.

Thank you for your time, and attention to this urgent need and the consideration

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