

3/20/23

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee,

For the record, I am Sue Hankner, representing A-Team MN

Thank you for this opportunity to present our perspective on SF2934.

A-Team MN is an organization founded by families who have a member with significant intellectual or developmental disability. We advocate for the civil rights, human rights, and dignity of our family members. We are the voice for family members who are unable or who have limited ability to speak and advocate for themselves.

We are part of a national organization that has chapters in 21 states. We collaborate with Voice of Reason, Together for Choice, and the Coalition for the Preservation of employment choice.

I am a co-founder of A-Team MN and parent of two sons with significant intellectual and developmental disabilities, ages 44 and 49.

A-Team MN families appreciate your efforts in finding solutions to the current workforce crisis that is causing group homes, intermediate care facilities, day programs and workplace options to close. We support increased funding to pay direct support professional competitive compensation.

A-Team MN supports MN laws that provide for person centered planning and informed choice. These are effective laws.

A-Team MN opposes provisions in SF2934 related to eliminating subminimum wage.

The subminimum wage task force excluded representation of workers who choose center based special wage and their families. It did not examine the efficacy of business model operations and wages paid to workers. It did not go to special wage workers to ask what they do; do they like it and why it is their choice.

We monitored all subminimum wage task force meetings open to the public. Their discussions demonstrated their lack of understanding of the range of intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Task force recommendations are based upon assumptions not tested for validation.

To be clear: No person with a disability is forced into subminimum wage work options. It is a choice.

Requiring minimum wage for this part time center-based work will not affect the rate of poverty among people with disabilities. It produces no economic gain for these workers who have all their housing, living, medical, food, transportation, day program and work option support expenses paid for with state and federal money with added funds raised by nonprofit providers.

In national A-Team USA meetings, we hear from families in states where subminimum wage is eliminated how there are people with significant intellectual or developmental disabilities have no place to go. There are no integrated employment jobs and no center-based jobs. Life enrichment programs are failing. They now stay home isolated in their rooms. Depressed. Loss of self-worth. Job skills lost.

We believe state investment in developing a full array of workplace options with infrastructure of supports from which all people with disabilities can choose has a better rate of return in user satisfaction.

Supports for our family members with disabilities includes an educated and trained workforce of Direct Support Professionals who must be competitively compensated for the support they provide 24/7 for our family members to live and to work.

Disability services are collapsing around our family members. Eliminating their workplace choice adds unnecessary anxiety. They do not understand why anyone wants to take away what they want to do and where they want to go.

They want to be with their community of friends, co-workers and supports.

Please honor their choice.

Lastly,

Proponents to eliminate special wages assert that people with disabilities and their families are "afraid" of change. That is simply not true in my network of parents with disabled children. We have lived a life of changes with our disabled child that most families cannot comprehend. We are outraged that they think they know more about what our disabled family member wants and needs than those who have lived along side them for their entire life.

We respectfully ask you to support center based special wage workplace choice.

We are imploring you: **Do not** take away the workplace choice of our family members.

Thank you for listening to A-Team MN perspective.