



Thank you to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights for inviting comments from the public for its investigation into 14c subminimum wage and recommendations. The following recommendations are submitted by the Wisconsin Survival Coalition of more than 30 cross-disability organizations, whose mission is to improve state and federal public policies to maximize the independence, inclusion and effective supports of people living with disability. We have worked toward improved employment policies statewide, including a strong Employment First law that prioritizes our three state departments (public education, health services and division of vocational rehabilitation within workforce development) to work together to make integrated employment supports the first priority of public funding. We also support our state health services' efforts to build pay-for-performance incentives into managed long-term care contracts. Within our Department of Public Instruction, Survival Coalition has worked to develop incentive grants for school districts that have a high percentage of students with disabilities working competitively in integrated employment and/or are in post-secondary education one year after leaving high school (using Indicator 14 data they collect) and supported a transition grant effort that schools can apply for to improve.

Wisconsin's data clearly tells the story that public policies need to move away from support for sub-minimum wage and toward supporting providers and funding streams to prioritize integrated employment and support it with adequate funding, rate structures, and staff development. In the 5 years since WIOA and HCBS accountability have been in place, Wisconsin has simultaneously seen:

1. An increased number of youth with disabilities exiting high school with integrated jobs and/or engagement in post-secondary education, including youth with the most significant disabilities. (From 2014 to 2018, the percentage of youth reporting being in job over 90 days rose from 52% to 57%; the percentage of youth earning minimum wage or greater rose from 69% to 84%; and from 2014 to 2017, the percentage of youth who reported getting a raise went up from 18% to 30%.
2. An increased number of youth engaging earlier in the DVR process and having integrated work experiences while still in school with the expansion and use of nearly \$11.3 million of DVR funds each year on Pre-ETS services for youth during the past two years.
3. A sharp reduction in the numbers of adults participating in sub-minimum wage activities (from 9,434 in 2016 to 5,417 in 2019.)

While our data for youth shows that with the right policies in place, expanded employment opportunities are occurring, Wisconsin still experiences challenges that the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and other federal agencies should take note of when developing disability policy in the future.

New data collection in sub-minimum wage facilities required on the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act tells us people with disabilities want to work in Competitive Integrated Employment but have been offered limited opportunities. Specifically, according to the UW-Whitewater Career Interview project

funded by Wisconsin's Department for Workforce Development (DWD) and mandated under WIOA in FY17, 3483 individuals who were working in a subminimum wage facility reported having a goal of employment other than 14c (sub-minimum wage employment). In FY18, that number increased to 3578 individuals reporting a goal of employment other than 14c employment. Despite this great interest in competitive wage employment, the interview data has not resulted in a substantial number of direct referrals to DVR or other state-funded employment services.

Like many states, the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) analysis of Wisconsin found: 1. There is a limited understanding of statewide policy and expectations along with highly variable implementation of services in Wisconsin 2. There is a lack of transparency in service definitions and funding 3. There is limited capacity building 4. There is a lack of an outcome focus on competitive integrated employment.

Therefore, it is Survival Coalition's recommendation that federal agencies and policy move away from support for sub-minimum wage and toward incentivizing, equipping and funding service providers, schools and others to deliver adequate and appropriate employment supports. Providers need a transparent rate process that incentivizes outcomes, and adequate support and training to transform their business and service delivery models. People with disabilities, particularly those with the most significant disabilities and their families, need early messaging from service systems and adequate opportunities throughout school and young adulthood so that they are developing early expectations of employment and career in the community, ample opportunities to practice and gain skills, and service systems that are equipped to support them in those efforts. We know from the research that one paid work experience for a student with disabilities while still in school doubles their likelihood of long-term adult employment. Two paid experiences while still in school increases that likelihood five-fold. It is time to move away from policies developed 80 years ago before the advent of IDEA, the ADA, WIOA and HCBS and into the 21st century where we have seen that with the right supports and the right job fit, all people with disabilities can work. The focus needs to be on improving the support system toward that goal.

Survival Coalition Co-Chairs:

- Beth Swedeen, beth.swedeen@wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-1166
- Lisa Pugh, pugh@thearc.org; (608) 469-9385
- Kristin Kerschensteiner, kitk@drwi.org; (608) 267-0214