



February 23rd, 2022

Representative Chris Tuck
State Capitol Room 216
Juneau, AK 99801
Via Email: representative.chris.tuck@akleg.gov

RE: HB 372 – An Act Relating to Exemptions from Minimum Wage

Representative Tuck,

The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (the Council) fills a variety of federal and state roles, including serving as the State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. As the state DD Council, the Council works with Senior and Disabilities Services and other state agencies to ensure that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families receive the services and supports that they need, as well as participate in the planning and design of those services. Our council membership is composed of self-advocates and family members of individuals with intellectual and development disabilities (60%), as well as agency and partner representatives (40%). One of the duties of the state DD Council is providing comments on proposed recommendations that may have an impact on individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and their families.

Council members wish to formally submit the following statements which speak to their views on the issue of sub-minimum wage pay for individuals with disabilities and the importance of this bill.

- Heidi Lieb-Williams, Council Chair, said, "We all have gifts and talents to offer, and our work is just as valuable as what others bring to the table. And we should be paid fairly for our time and knowledge. It is demeaning that someone could just look at a person and judge them on the basis of their disability and offer them less than they are worth. As Alaskans we are better than that, and this repeal will help us all acknowledge that."
- Corey Gilmore, Chair of the Committee on Community Inclusion, Supports, & Services said, "In 2018 we advocated for the DD Shared Vision, which put Alaskans who receive services in charge of their care. And this bill is the next step in realizing the Vision for all of Alaska. Not only does the Vision give us the right to direct our care, but the repeal of the subminimum wage further solidifies that we are competent Alaskans with something to offer our state."

- Jena Crafton, Council Vice Chair said, “It is their right to get paid for what they do. I think that paying people less than minimum wage is unfair. Good paying jobs, and jobs that people with disabilities want and dream about it is important for them to have that.”
- Ric Nelson, Chair of the Self-Advocacy and Leadership Committee said, “This bill is so important because all people no matter their disability should get paid at least minimum wage to do the same job as their able-bodied peers. Having a law that singles someone out as not deserving the same pay solely because of their disability is dehumanizing. As a person with a disability who has worked hard to have a successful career and earned a master’s degree, I find that this statute reinforces the misconception that individuals with disabilities are somehow a liability for an employer. Keeping this statute sends the message that Alaska is a land of opportunity only if you are not disabled.”
- Dean Paul, Chair of the Employment Committee said, “It is inhumane to discriminate against people with disabilities. Equal pay for equal work is important. As the Chair of the Employment Committee for the Council on Disabilities and Special Education, I strongly support this bill and remind legislators that our laws are a reflection of our values.”

These remarks are respectfully submitted on behalf of the Council and the individual members above through the GCDSE Executive Director. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Myranda Walso
Executive Director, GCDSE