

**From:** Cheryl Felak <[CHERYLFELAK@msn.com](mailto:CHERYLFELAK@msn.com)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, October 9, 2018 3:08 PM

**To:** Ramona Hattendorf <[RHattendorf@arcofkingcounty.org](mailto:RHattendorf@arcofkingcounty.org)>; Cathy Murahashi <[CMurahashi@arcofkingcounty.org](mailto:CMurahashi@arcofkingcounty.org)>

**Subject:** Questions regarding minimum wage advocacy

Hello Ramona and Cathy,

I am writing with some concerns and am hoping to have a conversation regarding the push to eliminate sub-minimum wage and special certificates for people with disabilities.

I fully support paying people with disabilities minimum wage and always have. I have concerns regarding the process that was taken in Seattle when concerns were not heard, research recommendations were not addressed and no evaluation of the results in Seattle or other areas which have eliminated sub-minimum wage are reviewed. There are many factors that are involved and without those issues addressed and planned for, the result has been a loss of employment for people in Seattle. (I have contacted the people affected and all but one have had their hours reduced since the rule change.)

My understanding is that Shaun Bickley is promoting a letter being passed around the state asking for agencies to endorse the elimination of sub-minimum wage. In this letter, there is no information shared with how this is going to take effect or how the funds are going to be produced to encourage supported employment.

As an example, my son works 9 hours a week with 1:1 support. He does make minimum wage and the vendor received about \$2700 a month to provide his support. With the rule change in Seattle, no one from the Seattle Commission for People with Disabilities contacted the City of Seattle Supported Employment program for information on job training and development. No information was shared regarding the cost of supports and how this change will affect those directly involved.

In fact, the way the new law is written, it is actually more discriminatory against people with disabilities than the previous law. Issues such as this could have been worked through if there had been at least a little collaboration with the people who were behind the rule change.

I know that this has been discussed in the King County Disability Division but I am concerned that the full impact of this rule change is not being addressed. I would greatly appreciate a discussion regarding this issue. I have attached a document which does outline most of the problems with the legislation in Seattle and the problems that occurred in the process. Feel free to correct any of the information if needed and let me know so that I may make corrections.

Thank you very much,

*Cheryl*

Cheryl Felak, RN, BSN

**From:** Ramona Hattendorf <[RHattendorf@arcofkingcounty.org](mailto:RHattendorf@arcofkingcounty.org)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, October 9, 2018 6:05 PM

**To:** Cheryl Felak

**Cc:** Cathy Murahashi

**Subject:** RE: Questions regarding minimum wage advocacy

Hi Cheryl,

We are not engaging on how the city of Seattle passed its ordinance. We have no position on the method involved and no interest in picking apart what the city did or did not do.

The city does run a GREAT supported employment program for people with developmental disabilities and we honored Heather Weldon this year for her work establishing and guiding it, and helping other large employers, such as Microsoft, establish their programs. Seattle has been a leader nationally on supported employment.

We do support ending use of subminimum wage certificates for people with disabilities, and we honor the people with disabilities who have made this a policy priority for some years now. We

see this as an integrated effort that requires advocacy on several fronts. In addition to working directly on subminimum wages, we are working on several related issues:

### **BASIC PLUS WAIVERS - supported employment for each qualified graduate**

We have been and continue to work on ensuring qualifying graduates can access employment support services through the state's Basic Plus waiver. A key part of this strategy is ensuring the state funds enough additional Basic Plus waiver slots to cover each qualifying graduate leaving transition services. For a number of years now, we have been successful in those efforts, and we are working to ensure those funding increases are automatic in the state budget. We also continue to work with families so they understand the supports available to their loved ones – both employment services and other services on the Basic Plus waiver that help build community connections. These supports are already in place; it is important that families understand they should access them as their loved one leaves transition services.

### **PROTECTING MEDICAID**

We have been working at the federal and state level to maintain or increase funding for Medicaid long-term services and supports, which are the funding mechanism for the employment services and other habilitative supports available through the home and community based waiver services.

### **BENEFITS – Removing limits on income so all qualifying people can access/buy into needed long-term supports**

We have been working to end the earned and unearned income limits placed on people enrolled in Healthcare for Workers with Disabilities. This program allows people to “buy into” Medicaid and keep the long-term supports that make independent living (including employment) possible. I am happy to say we have strong legislative support for this, and we have been working with the appropriate people at the Healthcare Authority to make it happen.

### **IMPROVED TRANSITION SERVICES**

We have also worked to improve the quality of transition services statewide, including building stronger bridges between OSPI, DVR and DDA. This work is ongoing, but the entities have been meeting and are making progress and ways to partner, inform and improve the services they offer, and on keeping families informed of choices available to young adults as they leave school.

and consider entering the workplace. We also continue to work on special education in general learning opportunities for people with disabilities.

## **FOCUS ON DATA**

As a point of policy, use of subminimum wage certificates has not been effective at advancing employment opportunities. The practice is deficit-based and singles out people with disabilities, requiring them - and only them - to “prove” their productivity.

The data shows that what is effective is supported, competitive employment; a discovery process where people can explore different work opportunities and choose a job well-suited to them; and training specific to the job. This is what we have been and continue to advocate for, and we are pleased that the state has chosen to invest in waivers that make employment services possible, and that King County has invested in supported and placing individuals in competitive employment, at minimum wage or better. We continue the work to ensure best practices are used state wide and to end use of subminimum wage certificates.

### **The benefits of hiring employees with disabilities include:**

- Employee retention: The turnover rate is 8% for employees with disabilities vs. 45% for other employees
- Return on investment: Employers see a \$28.69 return on each dollar invested in accommodations
- Various tax benefits available to employers who hire people with disabilities

Interestingly, most DDA clients being paid subminimum wages are NOT high acuity. The May numbers show more than 60 percent are medium or low acuity.

I am glad that you are supportive of employment services and hope you will engage with your legislators around the need to continue funding services for all qualifying transition graduates.

I do not think a meeting will be productive. We are not engaging on what the city of Seattle did or did not do and we are already working on integrated policy to advance employment of people with disabilities.

Best,



**Ramona Hattendorf** | Director of Advocacy

**Office:** 206.829.7048 | **Mobile:** 206.778.8623

[For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.](#)

*We teach civic engagement and leadership skills and connect people to opportunities so they can be the change they want to see. [Learn more.](#)*

**From:** Cheryl Felak <[CHERYLFELAK@msn.com](mailto:CHERYLFELAK@msn.com)>

**Date:** October 9, 2018 at 7:49:16 PM PDT

**To:** Ramona Hattendorf <[RHattendorf@arcofkingcounty.org](mailto:RHattendorf@arcofkingcounty.org)>

**Cc:** Cathy Murahashi <[CMurahashi@arcofkingcounty.org](mailto:CMurahashi@arcofkingcounty.org)>

**Subject: Re: Questions regarding minimum wage advocacy**

Hi Ramona,

I have no interest in engaging on what Seattle has done and that was not my intention at all. My concern is moving forward and that the issues of funding, job skill development, job training, transportation are addressed as part of the whole supported employment picture. Without the support for these people, there will be no jobs - sub-minimum or minimum wage. That is my concern.

You have much more availability to data and information than I do regarding the numbers of people involved and where their funding comes from, how many hours they work and how much support they need to be employed and what other options are available for them if they are not employed.

That's great that The Arc is looking at an integrated policy to address employment. Yes, I have had contact with Heather and the City of Seattle Supported Employment program. I understand the time and efforts involved in creating a job for a person with significant disabilities who require extensive support. This population may not be the majority of the workforce but they are a critical part of it and the issues of funding for continuing this need to be part of the conversation.

My concern was the fact that the only thing mentioned was the wage as if that is the single factor for employment. As you have written below, there is quite a bit more that goes into it and it would be helpful to let others know that those issues are also being looked at so people can earn minimum wage.

I do think it is worthwhile to evaluate what has happened in those other states and in Seattle in the process of moving forward. I do think that the Seattle law could have been written better to not be discriminatory for people with disabilities - maybe that is something that can be addressed moving forward.

Thank you for getting back to me.

***Cheryl***