**Ending subminimum wages for people with disabilities**

[HB 1706](https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1706&amp;Year=2019&amp;Initiative=false)**. Sponsored by Representatives** [Frame](http://leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/default.aspx%23frame), [Sells](http://leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/default.aspx%23sells), [Macri](http://leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/default.aspx%23macri), [Doglio](http://leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/default.aspx%23doglio), [Gregerson](http://leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/default.aspx%23gregerson), [Riccelli](http://leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/default.aspx%23riccelli), [Callan](http://leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/default.aspx%23callan), [Jinkins](http://leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/default.aspx%23jinkins), [Goodman](http://leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/default.aspx%23goodman), [Valdez](http://leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/default.aspx%23valdez), [Bergquist](http://leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/default.aspx%23bergquist), [Kloba](http://leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/default.aspx%23kloba), [Pollet](http://leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/default.aspx%23pollet)

**SUBMINIMUM WAGES DON’T PAY.** As public policy, subminimum wages cost tax payers more and marginalize people with disabilities. The laws allowing them date to the 1930s and led to sheltered workshops where people with disabilities were not only segregated, they were paid pennies on the dollar, often at taxpayer expense. In

today’s Washington – where sheltered workshops have been mostly phased out – subminimum wages subject people with disabilities to discrimination in the workplace and undercut their earning potential.

**WHICH IS BETTER? 87% SUCCESS, OR 1%?** Research and real-world experience both tell us that with the right job match and tailored supports, even people with the most significant support needs can work successfully in competitive, integrated employment at minimum wage or higher. “Competitive and integrated” just means a normal job in a normal workplace, alongside co-workers who do not have disabilities.

In Washington, we lead the nation with an 87 percent employment rate of people with developmental disabilities who receive employment services. We do this by helping people find the right job and follow up with training specific to that job. In states that rely on subminimum wages to spur employment, as few as 1 percent of people with developmental disabilities who are receiving employment supports are competitively employed in integrated settings.

**THE REAL ISSUE? BAD JOB MATCHES.** Subminimum wages are set by productivity tests. People with disabilities are paid based on a percentage of what a “normal” person would produce. No other employees are subject to this test; the presence of disabilities is presumed to hinder job performance. The real issue with job performance, though, job *suitability*. This is true for everyone. If someone is in the wrong job, they aren’t going to thrive. Rather than place people in jobs they aren’t suited to, we should help them find a good match.

**TAXPAYERS PAY MORE TO SEGREGATE:** Subminimum wages are most often used in sheltered workshops. Studies show these are not environments that people with disabilities seek out or prefer, regardless of the level of disability. And yet, tax payer money is often used to subsidize these settings. Instead of investing in job matches and training for jobs in the community, employment support funds are used to operate sheltered workshops. The same money, when invested in community options, RETURNS MORE to the taxpayers. A study of rehabilitation cases from 2002 to 2007 found that or every $1 invested into supported employment, $1.46 was returned to taxpayers.

**CIVIL RIGHTS**. Subminimum wages don’t pay. And they don’t align with civil rights advancements. Washington’s law allowing subminimum wages dates to 1959. It predates the Americans with Disabilities Act and other civil rights law. When it passed, schools could refuse to educate people with disabilities. Allowing subminimum wages allows employers to treat people with disabilities differently. No class of employees should be marginalized, and minimum wage protections should be just that. Protections. For everyone.

**Supporting organizations for ending subminimum wages for people with disabilities include self-advocacy groups, employment providers for people with disabilities, and community organizations across the state:**

Able Opportunities, Inc. Allies in Advocacy

Alpha Supported Living Services

American Association of People with Disabilities

The Arc of King County

The Arc of Snohomish County

The Arc of Washington

Artist Coalition for Equitable Development ASUW Middle Eastern Student Commission ASUW Student Disability Commission AtWork!

Autistic Self Advocacy Network Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network

Bellingham Deaf and Disability Justice Collective

Building Changes

Cafe Red

Cascade Connections Cascadia Deaf Nation

Centerforce

Community Employment Alliance Community Residential Services Association Community to Community Development Creative Justice

D2 Neighborhood Action Council

D3 Neighborhood Action Council

D4 Neighborhood Action Council

Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund

Disability Rights Washington

Downtown Emergency Service Center

Eleanor Elizabeth Institute for Black Empowerment

Foundation for Divergent Minds

Geeks Without Bounds

Human Rights Watch

Martin L

uther King County Labor Council Morningside

National Council on Independent Living National Federation of the Blind of Washington

Northwest Access Fund

Not Dead Yet

Open Doors for Multicultural Families

People First of Bellingham/Whatcom

People First of Clarkston

People First of King County

People First of Lake Roosevelt

People First of Snohomish County People First of Washington

Public Defender Association

Puget Sound Regional Services

Queer the Land

Restaurant Opportunities Center Seattle (ROC-Seattle)

Restaurant Opportunities Centers United (ROC-United)

Seattle Disability Commission

Seattle Human Rights Commission

Seattle Immigrant & Refugee Commission

Seattle Labor Standards Advisory Commission

Seattle LGBTQ Commission

Seattle Women’s Commission Seattle Youth Commission

SEIU 925

SEIU 1199NW

Self-Advocates in Leadership Service Alternatives

Sherwood Community Services

Socialist Alternative

Supported Solution TASH

Third Place Design Co-operative Total Living Concept

Trillium Employment Services UFCW 21

Volunteers of America Western Washington

Washington ADAPT West

Washington APSE Washington CAN

Washington Developmental Disabilities Council

Washington Low Income Housing Alliance

Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO

WISE

Working Washington Work Opportunities



This handout was prepared by

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