**Policy Spotlight: Challenging Sub-Minimum Wages**

Around the country, states and communities are looking to raise the minimum wage to help people meet basic living standards, yet **people with disabilities can still be paid less than minimum wage** through the current federal sub-minimum wages policy. About 122,000 people with disabilities are affected by this policy, and the majority **earn less than $3.50 an hour** (US Government Accountability Office, 2023). Furthermore, the vast majority of states in the US still currently provide waivers allowing subminimum wages (Avellone et al., 2023), and employers paying sub-minimum wages include both non-profit and for-profit organizations.

Over the past 30 years, self-advocates, families, disability rights organizations, researchers, and educators have been pushing back hard against sub-minimum wages. They make compelling arguments that people with intellectual and/or physical disabilities are productive and important workers and that it is not ethical to pay people with disabilities less than the minimum wage. **Disability rights organizations have called specifically for the elimination of sub-minimum wages for students with disabilities, by getting rid of 14(c) certificates for students working while in school and in job placements after leaving school** (APSE, 2022). Individual states are also engaging in this fight, with eight states and the District of Columbia eliminating the use of sub-minimum wages thus far.

We also have a strong body of research over the past 30 years showing interventions that can support successful competitive integrated employment (CIE) for individuals with even the most significant disabilities. Recent policy innovations seek to steer youth toward CIE rather than subminimum wages—through pre-employment transition services that provide earlier employment-related services to high school students with disabilities and through inclusive postsecondary education programs that expand college opportunities for transition age youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

This is a pressing issue that affects many students with disabilities and their families during the transition process. If you’re a DCDT member and interested in learning more about sub-minimum wages and their impact on transition-aged youth with disabilities, please join us for the upcoming DCDT Town Hall on subminimum wages. **This virtual town hall meeting will be held on Thursday, 4/18 from 3-4 pm ET.** Be on the lookout for details about this event – we hope to see you there!