

Date: January 23, 2018

To: Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing & General Affairs

From: Ed Paquin, DRVT Executive Director

- People with disabilities, like everyone else, do better and live more independently when they can earn a decent living. Vermont has mostly eliminated subminimum wage for people with disabilities and, unless we want to subsidize low-pay employment, people need to earn enough to live on. And this applies to all!
- People do have differing abilities and do have different needs. As you consider the positive effects of raising a required minimum wage, please look in detail at the effects on people whose circumstances have required that they use government funded supports. The term “benefits cliff” is familiar to us all and it is a real consideration for people who want to increase their independence from state support but who see that small gains in earning do not offset losses to their overall level of supports.
- People who work in service of the needs of people with serious disabilities often earn wages that are relatively low compared to the importance of the work they do. And in the case of many, their work is supported by State funding. It would be counterproductive to raise the wage paid to direct service workers and then fail to provide the State funding for the needed hours of service.
- Please raise the wages for Vermont’s low-income people but do so thoughtfully in a way that actually benefits the whole state and addresses some of the inequities of opportunity that have evolved in our economy.

Thank you for your consideration!