



For Immediate Release
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Madison Common Council Approves Pay Hikes for Employees with Disabilities

Madison Common Council members approved an ordinance change at their meeting February 28, ending the payment of subminimum wage to employees with disabilities. This change comes from the joint efforts by the Department of Civil Rights and the Human Resources Department, and was prompted by efforts of statewide and national organizations including the Board for People with Developmental Disabilities, the Arc of Wisconsin, and the National Federation for the Blind.

The city began the use of a 14c license from the Department of Labor, which allows employers who qualify to pay employees with disabilities less than minimum wage, in the mid 1980s when training programs were scarce.

“Madison has been a leader for decades in employing individuals with developmental disabilities in City government. These employees have become valued members of city staff,” says Lisa Pugh, State Director, The Arc Wisconsin. “This step in recognizing the civil rights of people with disabilities to equal pay sends a strong message. The Arc Wisconsin thanks Madison for once again leading the way.”

“This change is long overdue,” said Madison Mayor Paul Soglin. “In a time when our focus is turning to equity within city policies and practices, this step emphasizes the commitment we have to valuing the contributions of all employees.”

“Dane County and the City of Madison have a more than 30-year history of progressive public policy and practice promoting full school inclusion for children with significant disabilities, and integrated employment in the community for adults with developmental disabilities, said Beth Swedeen, executive director of the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities. “In fact, Dane County has the highest integrated employment rate for people with disabilities in the country. It is truly gratifying to see the city embrace that proud achievement with updated practices that convey how much the city respects and values the contributions of its employees with significant disabilities.”