



December 11, 2018

Dear Members of the Subcommittee on Workforce Protections,

As you reflect upon the implications of instituting a \$15/hr. minimum wage please take into consideration these statements from faith leaders of our coalition of federal advocacy organizations. They speak on behalf of millions of members across the nation and speak to the deeper moral issue at stake.

**Sister Simone Campbell, SSS, Executive Director, NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice:**

“Hebrew and Christian scriptures exhort employers to pay just compensation to workers—especially those who depend most on their wages for survival. In the United States higher minimum wages increase family incomes for those at the bottom of the economic ladder. These are the workers who most need a raise to survive. Income inequality and dwindling paychecks are now among the most urgent economic issues of our time. A \$15 minimum wage is a widely accepted benchmark to address it.

Pope Francis reminds us that the struggle of poor, working people is not first a ‘social or political question. No! It is the Gospel, pure and simple’.

This is not a radical idea. Jurisdictions across the nation have already adopted the \$15 minimum wage, thus providing raises for a total of 22 million low-income workers. African Americans, Latinos, and women make up a disproportionate number of workers earning wages below \$15 an hour. They power some of the largest, fastest-growing, and most important industries and deserve to be paid a wage they can live on. A \$15 minimum wage would offer a real and significant improvement in the ability of women and people of color to make ends meet. It would help to mend the persistent gender and race-based pay and wealth gaps.

‘A laborer is worthy of his [and her!] wages.’ (1 Tim 5:18) It is past-time for Congress to step-up and do the moral thing: adopt a universal \$15 minimum wage to improve the lives of all low-income workers across the nation.”

**Nancy K. Kaufman, CEO National Council of Jewish Women:**

“Jewish texts teach the importance of *kavod ha'briyot*, respect and dignity for all people. The National Council of Jewish Women supports a living wage for all, so that workers can support themselves and their families, and contribute to their communities. Raising the minimum wage is especially important for women and people of color, who disproportionately earn less than \$15 an hour.”

**Lawrence E. Couch, Director of the National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd:**

“In this nation of riches, hard work is rewarded – but not for all. Millions of workers in the United States are underpaid for their labors and the crushing effects ripple across our country – mothers and fathers who die far too young; children who go to school hungry and whose futures are bleak.

The National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd calls on Congress to mandate a \$15 per hour wage floor.

When people work full time, they should be able to feed, clothe, educate, and provide shelter for themselves and their families. Who can do that with the current minimum wage? Let's raise the minimum wage to at least \$15 per hour as a step toward recognizing people's hard work and providing them with the financial recognition they deserve. And by raising the minimum wage, we will lift millions of people out of poverty. ‘So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.’ (James 4:17)”

**Rev. David Beckmann, President, Bread for the World:**

“Raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour would significantly reduce hunger in America. The Bible is clear, ‘The laborer deserves to be paid’ (1 Timothy 5:18).”

**Rev. Ebony J. Grison, Director, Ecumenical Poverty Initiative:**

“Minimum wage jobs help to keep America running. In years past, they provided our first jobs. Increasingly, they sustain entire families. These jobs provide a foundation for our daily lives in industries on which we depend, yet often take for granted. From sea to shining sea, minimum wage jobs undergird the American economy. Our current national minimum wage is not enough money to sustain workers or the American families. A \$15 minimum wage would allow workers to sustain their families, even as we begin to address some of our deep economic inequalities.

The cost of living in the United States has long eclipsed its minimum wage. In many cases, minimum wage workers work themselves into poverty trying to make ends meet. No one in this country should work a full-time job (let alone two) and still be poor. To paraphrase Romans 4:4, an increased minimum wage is not a gift, it is long overdue. Increasing the minimum wage is economic justice. Congress, please do not withhold good from those to whom it is due when it is within your power to do. (Proverbs 3:27)”

**Diane Randall, Executive Secretary, Friends Committee on National Legislation:**

“As Quakers, we believe that a just society affirms the dignity and worth of every human being. People gain dignity from work and find well-being and meaning when their work is compensated with a decent wage. The federal minimum wage is completely inadequate--for many households, it is a poverty level wage. A parent working full time at minimum wage should be able to provide for his or her children. It is far past time for Congress to take action. It is time that Congress raises the minimum wage.”