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Governor Christie's Conditional Veto of the Bill to Increase Minimum Wage Hurts New Jersey

Members of the New Jersey Time to Care Coalition came together to express its disappointment in Governor Christie's action today on legislation (A2162) that would raise New Jersey's minimum wage to \$8.50 an hour and tie future increases to the annual cost of living. The Governor's Conditional Veto, phasing in a \$1 increase over *three* years does absolutely nothing to address receding wages. A meaningful higher minimum wage is desperately needed for New Jersey's working families and the Governor's action falls well short of meeting that need.

"We are extremely disappointed in the Governor's action today. The proposed increase in New Jersey's minimum wage to \$8.50 an hour would have not only helped New Jersey's working families who are struggling to get by, but would have also boosted our economy, generating millions in additional economic activity and creating thousands of jobs," said Phyllis Salowe-Kaye, director of New Jersey Citizen Action.

"Governor Christie's dollar increase over two years and removal of indexing from the bill to raise minimum wage, was to presumably help small businesses, but he has it backwards," said Eric Cedano, owner of Fast Photo Plus in Elizabeth, and member of NJ-MSA. "Indexing is the best type of 'phasing in' of a minimum wage increase for small businesses as the increase will be guaranteed to adjust slightly every year at a steady pace. Furthermore, a \$1 increase spread over three years is not enough to make an impact in consumers' spending. What my business needs is customers with more money in their pockets and 25 cents this year, 50 cents next and another 25 cents three years later doesn't cut it."

"I make \$7.50 and it is not enough to adequately make ends meet. A dollar increase would help me save money so I could go back to school and open up doors for a higher paying job" said Rhi Anderson, assistant manager at a local pizza chain.

Indexing would help maintain the minimum wage's value as well as provide predictability to employers. By removing indexing, the ever increasing costs of living will cause New Jersey's most vulnerable workers to continue to fall behind. Over the past four decades, the real purchasing power of the minimum wage has eroded by nearly one-third. Indexing would give businesses more control over pay with guaranteed small, annual increases instead of irregular and unpredictable jumps when legislatures have to compensate for years of inaction on the wage.

"Clearly Governor Christie doesn't understand that every year it gets harder to make ends meet, as costs at the grocery store and the gas pump go up and up, my family has less and less left over," said child-care provider and member of NJ Communities United, Ida Jackson. "We can't wait for a phased in increase and by not connecting the minimum wage to increasing costs it's hard for me to see the light at the end of the tunnel without working people taking a stand."

"My daughter earns \$7.50 an hour at a fast food restaurant. She works hard, but because she makes so little she can't support herself financially. I help to pay her bills, but it's tough because I only make \$10.61 as a caregiver at a nursing home," said Regina Santos, a member of 1199 SEIU. "I want her to have a bright future and be able to live independently. Increasing the minimum wage would have really helped us out, so I'm very disappointed that Gov. Christie refused to sign this bill."

** Please contact Yarrow if you wish to speak with any of the small business owner or minimum wage workers.*

New Jersey Time to Care Coalition is a broad-based group of community, advocacy, union, religious, research, and academic organizations working to support policies that strengthen communities by ensuring that working families can balance their responsibilities at home and on the job.