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Working Families and Small Businesses Need a Minimum Wage Increase that Matters

“You can’t survive on \$7.25” – Alicia Scott, Member SEIU 32BJ

Governor Christie has until Monday to sign the bill (A2162) to raise minimum wage to \$8.50 with indexing. The Time to Care Coalition urges the Governor to enact this desperately needed legislation for a meaningful higher minimum wage; anything less than his full approval of the legislation is unacceptable for New Jersey’s working families.

Currently at \$7.25 an hour, our state’s lowest paid full-time workers make only \$15,080 a year – \$4,000 below the poverty line for a family of three. This is unacceptable in a state with one of the highest costs of living. A modest increase in the state’s minimum wage to \$8.50 an hour would not only help New Jersey’s working families but would also give a boost our state’s economy, generating million of dollars in additional economic activity and creating thousands of additional jobs. But unless the minimum wage is also adjusted annually based on cost of living increases many households will continue to struggle to make ends meet, their spending and purchasing power will be limited, and the state’s economy will suffer.

“At my downtown Newark eatery, I pay more than minimum wage because my employees are real people trying to make a real living supporting their families. They work hard and deserve decent pay”, Harvest Table owner Carissa Borraggine said. “Paying more than minimum wage is better for staff morale, reduces turn-over, and helps me keep a quality people on staff. I think they’re worth every penny!”

“It’s not necessary to be good at math to understand our lives as low-wage seasonal workers,” said former farmworker Zenon Perez Alavez, a member of CATA, the Farmworkers Support Committee. “We ask that for an increase in the minimum wage so that we can overcome the poverty that we find ourselves in. We are only asking for what is fair to be able to survive.”

Tying the minimum wage to inflation will prevent New Jersey’s most vulnerable workers from falling behind again as they have in recent years, when wages have stagnated despite skyrocketing prices for food, heat, gasoline, transportation and other essentials. Over the past four decades, the real purchasing power of the minimum wage has eroded by nearly one-third. For example, the federal minimum wage would currently be over \$10 an hour had it kept pace with inflation since 1968.

"An increase in the minimum wage would help me give a better life to my children and would allow me to save more for their education," said Carmen Hernandez, a warehouse worker and mother of two who is an active member of New Labor.

** 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.