

Dear Members of Congress:

The undersigned faith-based organizations urge that The Raise the Wage Act of 2021 be passed into law as quickly as possible and by whatever means necessary. The Raise the Wage Act, as introduced in the Senate by Senators Bernie Sanders (VT) and Patty Murray (WA), and in the House by Representative Robert C. “Bobby” Scott (VA), is a necessary part of our national recovery from the devastating effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic and now is the time to show solidarity with workers.

As members of the faith community, we are deeply concerned about the plight of our sisters and brothers who work hard but still struggle making ends meet. According to our faith traditions, justice requires that workers receive a just wage that provides a standard of living in accordance with their God-given dignity.

If enacted, the Raise the Wage Act of 2021 would:

- Gradually raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2025;
- After 2025, adjust the minimum wage each year to keep pace with growth in the median wage — a measure of wages for typical workers;
- Phase out the egregious subminimum wage for tipped workers, which has been frozen at a meager \$2.13 since 1991; and
- Steadily terminate unacceptable subminimum wages for workers with disabilities employed in sheltered workshops and for workers under age 20.

As the COVID-19 Pandemic enters its second year, families across the nation are facing unprecedented burdens. **Steadily raising the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2025 and eliminating subminimum wages for tipped workers, youth workers, and workers with disabilities is essential to our communal recovery and recognizing the dignity of all workers across the country.**

Currently, more than 15 million adults are behind on rental payments, nearly 24 million adults — and as many as 12 million children — are struggling with food insecurity, and more than 80 million adults are having trouble covering usual household expenses. Our neighbors are not making enough to survive. In the face of a devastating year, there is no option but to pass the Raise the Wage Act, which provides for workers’ financial well-being and fosters their sense of self-worth as individuals and members of society.

Members of Congress have thanked essential and frontline workers for a year for their service, but gratitude is useless if it does not translate to necessary and immediate change. Essential and frontline workers make up a majority of those who would benefit from a \$15 minimum wage. The median pay is well under \$15 an hour for many essential and frontline jobs. Examples include substitute teachers, nursing assistants, and home health aides. More than one-third (35%) of those working in residential or nursing care facilities would see their pay increase, in addition to home health aides and other health care support workers. One in three retail sector workers (36%) would get a raise, including 42% of workers in grocery stores. More than four-in-ten (43% of) janitors, housekeepers, and other cleaning workers would benefit. Nearly two-thirds

(64%) of servers, cooks, and other food preparation workers would see their earnings rise by \$5,800 on a year-round basis. Ten million workers in health care, education, construction, and manufacturing would see a raise--representing nearly one-third (31%) of the workers who would see a raise.

Additionally the financial burden of the pandemic has disproportionately affected women, and even more so women of color. Women and women of color disproportionately occupy low-wage jobs because of occupational segregation; many of these women have been forced out of the workforce this year in order to care for their families as schools and childcare facilities have been unable to open.

Raising the minimum wage is essential to closing the gender and racial pay gap that has harmed marginalized communities for centuries. Of the 32 million workers whose pay would increase, nearly 6 in 10 (59%) are women and more than a quarter (28%) have children. One-third (31%) of African-American workers and one-quarter (26%) of Latinx workers would get a raise if the federal minimum wage were increased to \$15. Almost one in four (23%) of those people who would benefit is a Black or Latina woman. African-American workers and Latinx workers are paid 10–15% less than white workers with the same characteristics, so the Raise the Wage Act would deliver the largest benefits to Black and Latinx workers -- about \$3,500 annually for a year-round worker.

An increase in the minimum wage is necessary for the health of our economy and our workers. Now is the time to pass the Raise the Wage Act of 2021. We call on all Members of Congress to give nearly 32 million workers the raise they have fought so hard to secure. Justice cannot wait; and neither can Americans who labor every day with insufficient pay. We urge Congress to pass the Raise the Wage Act as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

African American Health Alliance
American Friends Service Committee
Bread for the World
Catholic Labor Network
Church World Service
Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice
Coalition for Spiritual and Public Leadership (CSPL)
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
DC Dorothy Day Catholic Worker
Disciples of Christ
Faith Action Network - Washington State
Franciscan Action Network
Georgetown University
ICNA CSJ
Islamic Society of North America
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Council of Churches
National Council of Jewish Women
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Pax Christi USA
Poligon Education Fund
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
The Labor Guild
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Association
Workers Defense League