



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Labor & Industry Acting Secretary, Legislators and Workers Urge Minimum Wage Increase to Benefit Persons of Color

Harrisburg, PA – Today, Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) Acting Secretary Jennifer Berrier joined Representative Manuel Guzman, Representative Malcom Kenyatta, and Spanish-speaking member of CASA in Pennsylvania to call for increasing the minimum wage to \$12 an hour with a pathway to \$15 an hour for persons of color in Pennsylvania.

“Persons of color have faced the challenges of hostile working environments due to all forms of discrimination,” said Acting Secretary Berrier. “Fighting for pay equity on top of a livable wage to survive is a heavy burden to carry and our workers deserve better. Too many workers, including health care and essential employees, restaurant employees, and essential workers are earning poverty wages while putting themselves at risk to keep our society running, particularly during the height of the pandemic. We must increase the minimum wage for every worker in Pennsylvania so they can not only survive but thrive while supporting themselves and their families.”

Gov. Tom Wolf’s proposal to raise the minimum wage to \$12 an hour with a pathway to \$15 by 2027 will boost incomes for nearly 1.1 million workers and put \$4.4 billion into the pockets of Pennsylvania workers in the first year. These workers will stimulate local economies in Pennsylvania through spending, with a minimum wage increase to \$15 boosting Pennsylvania’s economy by \$321 million in 2027.

“Since I arrived in this country, I have worked my hardest,” said the CASA in Pennsylvania member and essential agriculture worker. “I have worked twelve-hours shifts, I have worked 7 days in a row, I have worked during this pandemic to make sure that we all had food on our tables and I do it with pride. Essential workers, like me, have kept the country afloat during the Covid19 pandemic. During the last year, I have worked many days knowing that I am putting my health and my family’s health at risk and I still don’t get a living wage. Now it is time for Pennsylvania to take action to get \$15 per hour over the finish line for all workers.” Established in 1985 assisting Central American refugees, CASA in PA is a community grassroots organization advocating for the expansion of opportunities for Latino and immigrant people in Pennsylvania.

Findings from the Keystone Research Center show those who would benefit from a \$15 minimum wage include:

- Persons of color make up 23% of Pennsylvania’s workforce, increasing the minimum wage to \$15 will directly benefit 29% persons of color.
- Increasing the minimum wage to \$15 would directly benefit:
 - 35% Hispanic workers

- 29% of Black (non-Hispanic) workers
- 18% Asian (non-Hispanic) workers
- 28% of other races/ethnicities

Since the last time the minimum wage was increased, its purchasing power has dropped by nearly 17 percent.

MEDIA CONTACT: Sarah DeSantis, dlipress@pa.gov

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