

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 4, 2022

Wolf Administration Joins Harrisburg Small Business Owners to Call for Legislative Action to Raise the Minimum Wage

Pennsylvania legislators have not acted to raise the minimum wage in almost 16 years.

Harrisburg – Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) Secretary Jennifer Berrier today joined the owners of Knead Pizza and Elementary Coffee at Harrisburg's Broad Street Market to highlight [Governor Wolf's minimum wage proposal](#) and share the real-life impacts a higher minimum wage would have on thousands of workers and their families.

"For too long, Pennsylvania's lowest-paid workers have faced an insurmountable challenge: working longer and longer hours at a wage the General Assembly has not voted to increase since 2006," said Berrier. "As inflation soars, and the prices of everyday essentials skyrocket, our minimum wage has remained stagnant. We simply cannot accept the fact that some employers continue to choose to pay workers just \$7.25 an hour, which is not enough income to sustain a single person, let alone a family. I applaud businesses like Knead Pizza and Elementary Coffee that are investing in Pennsylvania families and building successful businesses by paying their workers a living wage."

Governor Tom Wolf's plan proposes raising Pennsylvania's minimum wage to \$12 per hour by July 1, 2022, with a pathway to \$15 per hour by 2028. The proposal will help workers recover the purchasing power lost since the minimum wage was set at \$7.25 per hour to match the federal minimum wage more than a decade ago. According to the Keystone Research Center, if the minimum wage had kept pace with productivity growth since the late 1960s, it would be more than \$24 per hour today in Pennsylvania.

"In the recession that followed the pandemic, many businesses in Pennsylvania experienced supply-side issues – including a shortage of needed laborers and skilled workers," said Rep. Patty Kim. "This unique circumstance spotlighted the need for employers to compete for labor, and what we are seeing in Pennsylvania and around the country is the market adjusting to the fact minimum wage – unchanged in Pennsylvania since 2009 – has lost its buying power. It is not a desirable wage, and it has not been a living wage in PA for some time. Now, as we face the highest inflation rates we've seen in 40 years, we must increase the minimum wage to protect low- and middle-class households which are the most vulnerable to this change."

During today's event, Berrier met with Knead Pizza owner, Jennie O'Neill, and Elementary Coffee owner, Andrea Grove-Musselman, and spoke with employees as they prepared various foods and drinks.

O'Neill and Grove-Musselman joined Berrier in the call for movement on Pennsylvania's minimum wage and shared how a higher wage benefits their employees as well as the company.

"The past few years have been incredibly unpredictable and raising our starting wage to \$15 per hour created stability for our company and our team," said O'Neill. "The higher wage allows us

to attract talented people and hold on to them longer. Seventy-five percent of our team has been with us for at least one year.”

Thirty states, including all of Pennsylvania’s neighbors, have a higher minimum wage than \$7.25 an hour. Polls show the public strongly supports increasing the minimum wage. Over the past two decades, there have been ballot referendums to raise the minimum wage in 20 states, most recently in Florida – every one has passed. It is estimated that approximately 42% of the U.S. workforce will earn at least \$15 an hour by 2026.

If the legislature were to take action to increase Pennsylvania’s minimum wage, more than 618,400 women would get a direct pay increase –nearly 21% of all women working in the commonwealth. With most low-paying jobs held by women in Pennsylvania, our current minimum wage only promises to further worsen the gender pay gap.

Legislative action on Governor Wolf’s proposal would also directly benefit 26.2% of persons of color, including:

- 31.9 percent of Hispanic workers
- 26.3 percent of Black (non-Hispanic) workers
- 15.7 percent Asian (non-Hispanic) workers
- 25.8 percent of other races/ethnicities

For more information, you can visit www.dli.pa.gov, or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

Video and photos from today's event will be available on PACast.com.

MEDIA CONTACT: Alex Peterson, dlipress@pa.gov

#