

MINIMUM WAGE & PAID VACATION

WSLC, AFL-CIO
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There is something inherently broken about an economy where workers must work multiple jobs to survive. A renter in Washington must earn \$30-\$40 an hour to afford a typical apartment without spending more than 30% of their income on housing, while Washington's minimum wage currently is \$16.66.

Low-wage work disproportionately falls on women (representing 7 out of 10 of the lowest-wage positions nationally, with more than 30% supporting children at home) and people of color.



THE PROBLEM

Wages are not keeping pace with the rising cost of basics like housing and groceries. Without action, the gap between rich and poor in this high-cost-of-living state will continue to grow, leaving millions of workers unable to meet their basic needs or balance work with life. Workers also need access to time off to recover, reset, and respond to personal or family emergencies.

THE SOLUTION

Raise the state minimum wage to \$25 an hour over several years; establish a minimum of 15 days of paid vacation, modeled after policies in CA and NY; and provide bereavement leave, in line with other states.

- **Research consistently indicates that increased worker earnings lead to higher local spending.** According to leading research, raising the minimum wage stimulates consumer spending, as lower-income households tend to spend additional income on essential goods and services in their communities.
- **Raising the minimum wage provides stability for low wage workers.** A 2024 California study on its \$20-an-hour fast-food minimum wage found no evidence of staffing reductions or scheduling instability, despite industry claims to the contrary.
- **Paid vacation is one of the most common benefits offered in the U.S., but access is highly unequal.** According to the 2023 BLS National Compensation Survey, 79% of U.S. private sector workers have paid vacation, compared to only 55% of service workers and 40% of part-time workers. Management and professional workers (92%) are far more likely to have access than lower-wage employees.
- **Separate bereavement leave will ensure workers can take time to grieve without fear of losing their jobs or income,** in line with states like Oregon, Illinois, and California which already require employers to provide this critical time off.

Citations: (1) Arindrajit Dube, UMass Amherst | (2) California's \$20 Minimum Wage Study, Berkeley



Learn more at wslc.org

Questions? Contact WSLC Legislative Director John Traynor at jtraynor@wslc.org



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