

Legislation Text

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Urging the Pennsylvania State Legislature to pass Governor Wolf's proposal to raise the minimum wage to \$12 an hour, with a pathway to \$15 an hour, for all workers in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

WHEREAS, Both the federal and state minimum wages have remained stagnant at \$7.25 an hour since July 2019. An adult working at a wage of \$7.25 an hour, 40 hours per week, 52 weeks per year yields an annual income of only \$15,080, a figure that is not high enough to keep even a family of two above the federal poverty line, let alone a family of three or more. It is clear: workers are not being paid fairly; and

WHEREAS, The consequences of this shamefully low minimum wage are dire for all citizens, those who are directly affected by it and those who are not alike: individuals, even those employed in full-time jobs, struggle to make ends meet and rely on public assistance programs to get by; and

WHEREAS, Stephanie Williams provides an emblematic case of the effects of a sub-optimal minimum wage. A home care worker, Williams helps "seniors stay in their homes instead of going into a nursing home. It's important work, but I only make \$10.50 an hour and have to rely on friends to be able to pay my bills. Raising the minimum wage would mean I wouldn't struggle just to survive anymore"; and

WHEREAS, On January 30, 2019, Governor Tom Wolf announced a plan to raise the minimum wage for all workers in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Under his proposal, the minimum wage would increase to \$12 an hour in July 2019, with gradual 50 cent increases until reaching \$15 an hour in 2025; and

WHEREAS, According to Governor Wolf, a minimum wage hike would affect all Pennsylvanians, not just those who would see an increase in their wages: "Raising the minimum wage lets people afford the basics, like food, rent and transportation. One fair wage saves tax dollars, grows the middle class and creates new customers for businesses, which benefits all of us"; and

WHEREAS, Additionally, Governor Wolf wants to transition the state to one fair minimum wage for all workers. Tipped workers currently struggle to survive on only \$2.83 an hour plus tips. These workers, predominately women, are twice as likely to live in poverty compared to the larger workforce, with nearly half relying on public assistance. Governor Wolf's plan would still allow for tipping, but workers would no longer have to rely on consumers, nor would employers be able to pass labor costs on to them; and

WHEREAS, Governor Wolf's proposal follows on from his earlier commitment to state workers. In June 2018, he signed an executive order raising the minimum wage for employers under his jurisdiction to \$12 an hour, with gradual wage hikes until reaching \$15 an hour in 2025; and

WHEREAS, The City of Philadelphia has pursued similar legislation to raise the minimum wage for City workers and employees of City contractors and subcontractors. Introduced by Councilman Mark Squilla, Council passed legislation that amended the 21st Century Minimum Wage and Benefits Standard to provide for the gradual elevation of the minimum wage to \$15 an hour in 2022; and

WHEREAS, Signed into law by Mayor Jim Kenney on December 20, 2018, the legislation demonstrates the City's commitment to lifting its residents out of poverty. However, the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania prevents the City from raising the minimum wage for all employers operating within Philadelphia: that authority resides only at the state level. Accordingly, we lend our full support to Governor Wolf's proposal; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby endorse Governor Wolf's proposal to raise the minimum wage to \$12 an hour, with a pathway to \$15 an hour, for all workers in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.