When a significant number of jobs in Schuylkill County don't pay enough for our neighbors to afford the basics – things like food, car repairs and eyeglasses – it hurts the local economy. For many people in our community, wages are so low that they don't even cover rent and the cost of getting around, forcing working people to rely on the local food bank to help make ends meet. Raising the wage floor can help restore spending on the basics and, in the process, boost the local economy.

Today, in the Pennsylvania Legislature, Senate Bill 12 and House Bill 1215 propose raising the minimum wage to $15 per hour by 2025. An increase in the minimum wage to $15 per hour would boost the wages of 24,000, or 39.6%, of the county's resident workforce. In total, wages in Schuylkill County would increase by $105 million.

The majority of workers in the county who would get a raise as a result of a statewide minimum wage increase are adults (92.8%) working full-time (62.6%). On average, the workers here that would benefit from a minimum wage increase earn 44.6% of their family's income.

Twenty-nine states including ALL of our neighboring states have already raised the minimum wage. In our neighboring states that have raised the minimum wage both wage and job growth has been stronger in industries most affected by a minimum wage increase. Raising the minimum wage is a road tested strategy that works as intended making it easier for workers to afford the basics and in the process boosting consumer spending which is good for the broader economy.

A majority (56%) of people support raising the minimum wage to $15 while establishing one fair wage for the mostly women that currently earn a tipped minimum wage of $2.83. Yet it has been more than a decade since the legislature took action to raise the wage. Increasing the minimum wage is long overdue, and raising it to $15 per hour would provide a meaningful boost in family incomes in the region and help make sure the growth of Pennsylvania's economy is broadly shared.

### Who Benefits From A $15 Minimum Wage?

- 57% are women
- 9% are people of color
- 93% are adults
- 50% are age 40 and older
- 41% are parents
- 63% work full-time
- On average the workers affected earn 45% of their family's income
- 39% have some college or more
- On average the teenagers affected earn 15% of their family's income

One in 10 minimum-wage-eligible workers in Pennsylvania has been the victim of wage theft by their employer. Pennsylvania needs more cops on the beat and larger penalties for employers who willfully violate the law by not paying workers what they are owed.

Eighteen states, including New York, New Jersey, Ohio, and the District of Columbia, adjust the minimum wage annually to better reflect changes in the cost of living. Once the minimum wage reaches $15 per hour, making a small annual adjustment, typically adding about 36 cents depending on rate of growth in median wages, to the minimum wage would stop politicians from using family budgets as a bargaining chip in the political games that dominate decision making in the General Assembly.
Frequently Asked Questions About A Minimum Wage Increase in Schuylkill County

“Doesn’t raising the minimum wage effect mostly teenagers?”

- In Schuylkill County 93% of the people impacted by a minimum wage increase to $15 are age 20 and older; strikingly 50% are over the age of 40.

“Can’t we agree teenagers really don’t need a $15 minimum wage?”

- Of those teenagers that would be affected by a minimum wage increase in Schuylkill County, they currently bring home on average 15% of their family’s income. The jobs impacted by the minimum wage are an important source of income for many working families saving for college.

“Doesn’t raising the minimum wage destroy businesses and jobs, hurting those the minimum wage was intended to help?”

- The minimum wage has increased in every state neighboring Pennsylvania and those increases have not impacted overall job growth or job growth in sectors most affected by a minimum wage increase like food services. In fact, even with the lowest minimum wage in the region, job growth overall and in food services have been SLOWER in Pennsylvania than in neighboring states (read more at https://goo.gl/vQLvmf).

“Won’t raising the minimum wage hurt small business?”

- Both big and small businesses pay low wages, and none of us would accept a small or larger business polluting our rivers or poisoning our food just to keep profits high. Raising the minimum wage rewards small and large businesses that profit while also paying living wages to their workers. To learn more about good employers that support a higher minimum wage, visit https://www.businessforafairminimumwage.org/

“Does the minimum wage really impact families with children?”

- Parents with children account for 41% of the workers impacted by a minimum wage increase to $15 in Schuylkill County. Just one child adds $537 in monthly expenses for childcare in Schuylkill County. That single expense is over a third the monthly income for a worker employed full-time at the current minimum wage of $7.25.
Working full-time at the minimum wage a worker will bring home an income of $1,257 a month. The monthly total cost of attending a Pennsylvania community college full-time for a low-income student is $630, a figure which balloons to between $1,408 and $1,646 for a State System or state-related university. Private and for-profit colleges are even more expensive. It's impossible to get skills for better-paying jobs when the jobs available don't pay enough to afford education and training to acquire more skills. Workers stuck in an economic dead end are vulnerable to exploitation by a rogue's gallery of payday lenders and for-profit colleges eager to saddle workers with debt packaged as a lifeline. A higher minimum wage is a critical first step to families providing themselves and their children the lifetime of better opportunities that come with a college degree.

Greater public investment in career and technical education is very much needed in Pennsylvania but there aren't enough good-paying technical and trades jobs for everyone to get one. In fact 40% of workers in Schuylkill County are in positions that pay low enough to benefit from a minimum wage increase to $15. Most of these are service jobs (e.g., retail, eating and drinking, caregiving, clerical, or building service jobs). Raising the minimum wage is the only way to help hard-working white, black and brown people in all jobs afford the basics and aspire to a middle class lifestyle.

The federal Earned Income Tax Credit is available to low-income working families with children and is most effective in lowering poverty and encouraging work when combined with a minimum wage increase. The tax credit is not a substitute for a minimum wage increase. The corporate lobbyists that promote the tax credit as an alternative to a minimum wage increase to date have never actually advanced a proposal to expand the tax credit in Pennsylvania. They seem only to value it as a rhetorical device when justifying their opposition to the minimum wage.
In 1968, the Pennsylvania minimum wage was half (51%) the value of the median wage ($1.60 vs. $3.15) for full-time full-year workers. In 2019, it is estimated the median wage will be $24.44 – more than three times the minimum wage. Our goal is to return the purchasing power of the minimum wage to just over half of the median wage by 2025.

With the cost of living above the statewide average in Schuylkill County our statewide wage target of $15 would provide workers here a monthly income of $2,600, a figure still short of the income needed to cover a basic monthly budget for a single adult of $3,004 in the region.

Our goal is not to radically alter the economy, but to get back to rules of the road that guarantee that when the economy grows all workers benefit, not just corporate managers and high-paid ex-politicians-turned-lobbyists.

The weight of evidence currently finds that modest increases in the minimum wage since 1990 have had no observable impact on employment for workers most likely affected by a minimum wage increase (read more at https://goo.gl/N412aR). This means that increased labor costs are absorbed through other channels like lower turnover costs, higher prices, and lower profits.

Given the low level of Pennsylvania's current minimum wage (just 30% of the median) the best available evidence indicate the risk of job loss from a minimum wage increase to anywhere from $10 to $12 is quite low.

Evaluations of bolder proposals that move the minimum wage to $15 are so far mostly positive, however even if we assume these bolder proposals lead to some people working fewer hours in the year, their annual incomes thanks to the higher minimum wage will increase (read more at http://epi.org/143838).

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### Frequently Asked Questions About A Minimum Wage Increase in Schuylkill County

#### “Don’t studies show that minimum wage increases lead to job losses?”

- The weight of evidence currently finds that modest increases in the minimum wage since 1990 have had no observable impact on employment for workers most likely affected by a minimum wage increase (read more at https://goo.gl/N412aR). This means that increased labor costs are absorbed through other channels like lower turnover costs, higher prices, and lower profits.

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#### “If raising the minimum wage is so good for the economy, why stop at $15?”

- In 1968, the Pennsylvania minimum wage was half (51%) the value of the median wage ($1.60 vs. $3.15) for full-time full-year workers. In 2019, it is estimated the median wage will be $24.44 – more than three times the minimum wage. Our goal is to return the purchasing power of the minimum wage to just over half of the median wage by 2025.

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  Our goal is not to radically alter the economy, but to get back to rules of the road that guarantee that when the economy grows all workers benefit, not just corporate managers and high-paid ex-politicians-turned-lobbyists.
The cost of a bag of French fries might rise by a few cents as a result of a minimum wage increase (read more at https://goo.gl/cGFuWV). But when the minimum wage is increased, the wages of workers affected by an increase grow faster than inflation, meaning workers have more buying power even if they are paying a few more cents for a bag of French fries.

Even in fast food and other low-wage industries, front-line workers’ wages are a small fraction of the costs of goods and services and there are offsetting savings (for example from lower turnover) which hold down price increases.

Workers impacted by minimum wage increases are more productive and better educated today than similar workers in the past. It’s long past time to restore the purchasing power of the minimum wage.
Frequently Asked Questions About A Minimum Wage Increase in Schuylkill County

"Isn't the cost of living lower here so people don't really need a $15 minimum wage?"

- The cost of living is actually above the statewide average in Schuylkill County and our statewide wage target of a $15 minimum wage would provide workers here a monthly income of just $2,600, a figure still short of the income needed to cover a basic monthly budget for a single adult of $3,004 in the region.

### Basic Family Budgets In Schuylkill County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 adult, no children</th>
<th>1 adult, 1 child</th>
<th>1 adult, 2 children</th>
<th>2 adults, 2 children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>$562</td>
<td>$698</td>
<td>$698</td>
<td>$698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>$252</td>
<td>$372</td>
<td>$544</td>
<td>$729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$537</td>
<td>$1,118</td>
<td>$1,118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>$829</td>
<td>$905</td>
<td>$983</td>
<td>$1,190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>$527</td>
<td>$797</td>
<td>$1,067</td>
<td>$1,594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Necessities</td>
<td>$329</td>
<td>$432</td>
<td>$501</td>
<td>$576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>$505</td>
<td>$611</td>
<td>$747</td>
<td>$902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monthly Expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>$3,004</strong></td>
<td><strong>$4,352</strong></td>
<td><strong>$5,658</strong></td>
<td><strong>$6,806</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monthly Income @ $15 per hour</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,600</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,600</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,600</strong></td>
<td><strong>$5,200</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: https://www.epi.org/resources/budget/