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STATEWIDE NONPROFIT CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED TO ENSURE A \$15 MINIMUM WAGE FOR NEW YORK HUMAN SERVICE WORKERS

Advocacy groups are encouraged by Governor Cuomo's call for a \$15 minimum wage and want to ensure that contracted nonprofit human services workers are included in any wage increase.

(New York, December 9, 2015) The Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (FPWA), the Fiscal Policy Institute (FPI) and the Human Services Council (HSC) are co-leading a campaign, #15andFunding, to advocate for a statewide \$15 per hour minimum wage for all low-wage workers, and to ensure that the call for an increased wage includes funding for state and city contracted nonprofit human services workers.

The three groups have come together to release a [report](#) on the current state of the human services sector, highlight the pervasive low-wages that plague its workers, and offer recommendations on how to ensure these workers are included in a statewide minimum wage increase.

The report found that the human services sector employs more than 200,000 workers across New York State. These workers provide essential services to communities including afterschool programs, child welfare, early education, services for older adults and homeless families and individuals. The report also found that this is a highly educated workforce where more than two-thirds have some level of college education, and 45% hold four-year bachelor's degrees or higher. Yet, half of the human services workforce currently makes under \$15 per hour, which for a 40-hour work week comes to under \$31,000 per year. Thirty percent of the sector makes less than \$10.50/hour, adding up to a yearly full-time salary of \$21,840 or less. In most parts of the state, this level of compensation is not sufficient to meet the high costs of living. Because of these economic realities, the human services workforce often looks remarkably like the populations they serve, and qualifies for the same supportive services.

The campaign is calling on New York State to:

- Raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour for ALL workers in New York State
- Ensure that employees at nonprofits are covered by the minimum wage increase
- Amend state and local government human services contracts to fund the wage increase

Unlike for-profit businesses, nonprofits are not able to increase the price of their services to account for increased wages. While nonprofit organizations must be included in a wage increase to remain competitive in workforce recruitment and retention, they do not have the means to increase their incoming revenue. In New York State, roughly 2,500 nonprofits rely on state contracts to carry out their essential human services. If those contract amounts do not increase with an increased minimum wage, the new minimum wage becomes an unfunded mandate that will negatively impact service delivery and likely cause many nonprofits to cease providing services.

"We are encouraged by Governor Cuomo's plan to raise the minimum wage for fast-food and state employees to \$15 per hour," said **FPWA CEO and Executive Director Jennifer Jones Austin**. "It is critical that all workers in New York State earn no less than \$15 per hour, including nonprofit employees working for human service nonprofits under contract with the State. Human Services workers are highly skilled and committed, but face pervasively low wages, high work load, and few career advancements. If they are excluded from a wage increase many will be forced to choose between the work they love or seek employment in a sector that pays a living wage."

James Parrott, Deputy Director and Chief Economist of the Fiscal Policy Institute stated, "Recruitment and retention of human service workers by nonprofits is already a serious problem because wages are so low in this sector, particularly given the responsibilities involved. Turnover rates exceed 30 percent in some parts of the sector. Without additional funding in government contracts, the State will be hard-pressed to ensure that these critical human services continue to be delivered in a quality manner."

"Nonprofit human service providers across the state support efforts to battle income inequality by raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour," said **Allison Sesso, Executive Director of the Human Services Council**. "This workforce delivers essential government services that promote the health and well-being of residents across the state, but despite the clear importance of the function they provide, these highly skilled and educated workers are poorly compensated. Financial starvation in this sector has led to program and organization closures, diminished quality and reach of services, greater signs of ongoing financial instability among too many organizations, and a very low-wage workforce with diminishing benefits. A living wage will support human service providers as they work to combat poverty, foster equity, and help New York's communities reach their full potential, bettering the lives of millions of New Yorkers."

Assemblyman Marcos A. Crespo, chair of the Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force, stated, "According to five decades of data, wages have been flat or even falling since 1964 regardless of job growth cycles. Over the past 25 years alone, food prices have increased by an average of 2.5% per year. That means that the cost of feeding our families has increased by over 62% while wages have been stagnant. What other evidence than hunger do we need to demonstrate that the current minimum wage is inadequate, insufficient and intolerable! It is clear to me that any effort focused on lifting working families and their children out of poverty must include a wage that gives them the ability to feed, house and clothes themselves without the fear of homelessness or going hungry."

"Buffalo has been ranked the nation's 4th poorest city," said **Assemblywoman Crystal D Peoples-Stokes**, "This isn't because people aren't working, they are. In fact, in some cases, they're working more than one job- the issue is they aren't making a living wage. In 2015, in one of the wealthiest countries in the world and in one of the most progressive states in the nation, we have hard working families struggling to make ends meet. It's time to do what's right. This is why I am proud to stand and fight with the human services industry to give people a living wage."

Coalition Members

ACRIA, Brooklyn Kindergarten Society, Care for the Homeless, CDPAANYS, Center Against, Domestic Violence, Center for Children's Initiatives, Child Development Support Corporation, Citizens' Committee for Children, Coalition Against Hunger, Council of Family And Child Care Agencies, Day Care Council of NY, Exodus Transitional Community, Family M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center, Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, Fiscal Policy Institute, Forestdale, Inc., Graham Windham, Good Shepherd Services, Heights and Hills, Homeless Services United, Inc., Housing and Services, Inc., Human Services Council, InterAgency Council of Developmental Disabilities Agencies, Inc., Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood Settlement House, Lower East Side Family Union, Lincoln Square Neighborhood House, LiveOn NY, MCCNY Charities, Inc., MercyFirst, New Alternatives for Children, New York Asian Women's Center, New York Memory Center, NY Association of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Providers, Inc. (ASAP), NY Therapeutic Communities, Inc., NYC Employment and Training Coalition, NYS Coalition for Children's Behavioral Health, Outreach, Penington Friends House, Riverstone Senior Life Services, Safe Horizon, SCO Family of Services, Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, Stein Senior Center, Supportive Housing Network of New York, The Coalition of Behavioral Health Agencies, The Greater New York Labor Religion Coalition, Turning Point Brooklyn, Inc., Union Settlement Association, United Neighborhood Houses , Urban Pathways, Women's Center for Education and Career Advancement, Women's City Club of New York, You Gotta Believe.

About FPWA

The Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (FPWA) is an anti-poverty, policy, and advocacy nonprofit with a membership network of nearly 200 human-service and faith-based organizations. FPWA has been a prominent force in New York City's social services system for more than 93 years, and strives to build a city of equal opportunity that reduces poverty, promotes upward mobility, and creates shared prosperity for all New Yorkers. Visit us at www.fpwa.org and follow us [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

About FPI

The Fiscal Policy Institute (FPI) is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit research and education organization committed to improving public policies and private practices to better the economic and social conditions of all New Yorkers. Founded in 1991, FPI works to create a strong economy in which prosperity is broadly shared. Visit FPI at www.FiscalPolicy.org.

About HSC

The Human Services Council of New York, a leading advocate for nonprofits providing human services, works to strengthen the ability of nonprofit agencies to improve the lives of New Yorkers in need. Nearly 200 nonprofit agencies throughout New York City and State are HSC members. Visit HSC at www.HumanServicesCouncil.org

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