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**April 29, 2021**

## **Labor & Industry Acting Secretary Urges \$15 Minimum Wage Increase to Benefit Women and Persons of Color**

**Harrisburg, PA** – Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) acting Secretary Jennifer Berrier was joined by Representative Peter Schweyer, and restaurant employee and member of Make the Road Pennsylvania, Luis Borja, today to call for an increase to Pennsylvania’s minimum wage to \$15 per hour to benefit women of and persons of color.

“It is long past time to raise Pennsylvania’s minimum wage and pay every worker a living wage,” said acting Secretary Berrier. “Raising the minimum wage to \$12 an hour with a clear path to \$15 an hour for all workers will significantly benefit women, persons of color, and workers in for-profit sectors like Luis Borja struggling to afford basic necessities with poverty wages.”

Governor Tom Wolf is proposing to raise the minimum wage to \$12 an hour with a pathway to \$15 by 2027, boosting incomes for nearly 1.1 million workers and putting \$4.4 billion into the pockets of Pennsylvania workers in the first year. Raising the wage to \$12 an hour will inject an additional \$116 million into Pennsylvania’s economy; an increase to \$15 will bolster Pennsylvania’s economy by \$321 million in 2027.

“As the cost of rent and mortgages, health care and food keep rising we have to make sure that wages rise too,” said Representative Schweyer. “For far too long those working low-wage jobs have suffered from Harrisburg’s inaction and it is long past time that we step up, respect the dignity and value of their labor and raise the minimum wage.”

“I currently have two jobs, I work at a gym and as a waiter in a restaurant,” said Luis Borja, Make the Road Pennsylvania member leader. “As a waiter, I’m a tip worker. I’m getting paid way below minimum wage, at a little under \$3 per hr. These are starvation wages. Why do I need two jobs to make ends meet? During the pandemic, I lost my job and didn’t have any benefits and I did not have sufficient money for rent and bills, and just like that I found myself homeless. This is not right. We need a living wage in PA. Workers like me deserve respect and dignity.”

Make the Road Pennsylvania is the largest Latinx organization in the state of Pennsylvania, dedicated to organizing the working class in Latinx communities, building power for justice.

Findings from the Keystone Research Center show those who would benefit from a \$15 minimum wage include:

- Persons of color make up 23% of Pennsylvania’s workforce, increasing the minimum wage to \$15 will directly benefit 29% persons of color.
- Increasing the minimum wage to \$15 would directly benefit:
  - 35% Hispanic workers
  - 29% of Black (non-Hispanic) workers
  - 18% Asian (non-Hispanic) workers

- 28% of other races/ethnicities

Since the last time the minimum wage was increased, its purchasing power has dropped by nearly 17 percent.

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