



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shelley B. Mayer

## Senator Shelley B. Mayer, Assemblymembers Chris Burdick, Steve Otis, Dana Levenberg, and MaryJane Shimsky, Local Elected Officials, and Supporters Urge that the Final State Budget Include the “Raise the Wage” Act

SENATOR SHELLEY B. MAYER April 25, 2023

| ISSUE: **MINIMUM WAGE**

(**Westchester, NY**) – New York State Senator Shelley B. Mayer was joined by Assemblyman Chris Burdick, Assemblyman Steve Otis, Assemblywoman Dana Levenberg, Assemblywoman MaryJane Shimsky, Westchester County Legislators, and supporters of “Raise the Wage” to urge that the final state budget includes proposed legislation to raise the state minimum wage to \$21.25 by January 1, 2026 and index it to inflation thereafter. With the ever-increasing cost of living, especially housing and a minimum wage in most of New York stalled at \$15 an hour, wages are now worth 15 percent less than in 2019. Working families are left to make hard choices to make ends meet. The Raise the Wage Act has **earned support** from over 80 Albany lawmakers, 30 labor unions, 300 businesses, and 160 advocacy organizations. The legislation is also extremely popular among New Yorkers, with **recent polling** showing that 80% of New Yorkers – including 65% of Republican voters – support raising the minimum wage to \$21.25 before indexing it.

The press conference comes after over 15 Westchester organizations and individuals sent a letter to state leadership urging them to pass a \$21.25 minimum wage. Signatories include the

Westchester Library Service, YWCA, Westchester Women's Agenda, Westchester Children's Association, Hope's Door, Neighbors Link, and more. These organizations have seen first-hand how the cost-of-living crisis is forcing Westchester families to make difficult decisions—like deciding between paying rent or buying groceries. Indexing New York's minimum wage without a catch-up first would lock in poverty wages for minimum wage workers, and would be futile for low-wage workers who make slightly above minimum wage.

New York State is not alone in grappling with a dire affordability crisis – many states and cities are working to raise their minimum wages by 2027. High cost regions of the country, including Washington, D.C., Denver, San Francisco, and Seattle have set minimum wages in the \$17 to \$18 range and are projected to reach \$20 to \$21 by 2027. High cost states like Massachusetts are proposing to raise their wages to \$20 by 2027 in response to the skyrocketing cost of living.

The Raise the Wage Act would deliver a meaningful raise similar in scale to the \$15 minimum wage—which delivered large raises to one in three New Yorkers without causing any job loss. [Five independent studies](#) have found that New York's 2016 legislation, which raised the minimum wage to \$15, led to historic reductions in poverty and earnings inequality in New York and did not hurt job growth. In fact, both upstate and down, jobs in New York grew as fast, and in many cases faster, as similar counties in states that didn't raise the minimum wage during that period. Raising the minimum wage also boosted sales at local businesses across New York and helped businesses keep their employees, saving them recruitment and retention costs.

Westchester County Legislators Terry Clements, David Imamura, Damon R. Maher, Catherine Parker, and Erika Pierce were also present; along with representatives from the YWCA of White Plains and Central Westchester, 32BJ SEIU, the Westchester Library System, Westchester Women's Agenda Board, Hope's Door, Neighbor's Link, Bloomy Cheese &

Provisions, Don Bosco Workers, and the Community Resource Center, were all present to show their support for the Raise the Wage Act.

**Senator Shelley B. Mayer said,** "I am proud to stand with my colleagues, workers, business owners, and supporters of the Raise the Wage Act. With the ever-increasing cost of living, the minimum wage of \$15 an hour, which was an important achievement, is no longer acceptable. Full-time employees earning the minimum wage in the New York suburbs simply cannot sustain themselves and their families. It is far too difficult to rent a one or two bedroom apartment, pay for utilities and other necessities at the current wage. Other states have demonstrated that raising the minimum wage brings greater prosperity to the state, businesses, and most importantly, people. It's time to raise the wage to \$21.25 by 2026, and index it going forward, so that all New Yorkers can afford the basic necessities and allow their families to thrive and live with dignity."

"We must include the Raise the Wage Act in our state budget. We need to have a livable wage. People shouldn't have to work more than one full-time job just to put a roof over their heads and food on the table. This simply can't wait," **said Assemblyman Chris Burdick.**

**Assemblyman Steve Otis said,** "With the rising cost of living and high inflation, it is important that the State take action to protect some of our most vulnerable New Yorkers by raising the minimum wage annually and providing for its enforcement. The minimum wage has not kept pace with inflation over the decades. I advocate for inclusion of this proposal in the state budget."

**Assemblywoman Dana Levenberg said,** "There are people in our state working full-time hours and facing housing insecurity. We cannot expect people to continue to work for wages that don't help them meet their basic needs. To retain the workers that power so much of our economy, we must raise New York's minimum wage and peg it to inflation."

“Our workers are suffering what amounts to a pay cut, simply by earning the same minimum wage that they earned in 2019. We therefore need to index the minimum wage to inflation, so that our working families don't fall behind again. For New Yorkers living near or below the poverty line, these changes cannot come soon enough,” **said Assemblywoman MaryJane Shimksy.**

**Senator Pete Harckham said,** “I support the legislation that will raise the minimum wage to \$21.25 an hour and then index it to inflation for one simple reason: too many hardworking New Yorkers are struggling to make ends meet because of increased costs. New Yorkers should be able to provide support and basic sustenance for themselves and their families without having to work two or three jobs. Raising the minimum wage will help the state’s workers pay their bills and also help build careers while strengthening our communities for the challenges ahead.”

"Every worker has a fundamental right to a livable, dignified wage. As the cost of living and basic necessities continue to soar, working people across New York state are struggling to make ends meet and living paycheck to paycheck on stagnant wages that have fallen behind many other states across the nation. This disparity is unacceptable and compounds systemic inequalities that disproportionately hurt communities of color and prevent families from achieving economic stability and upward mobility,” **said Senator Jamaal Bailey.** “Passing the Raise the Wage Act is not only a moral imperative, but smart policy that will bring countless individuals out of poverty and make a meaningful investment in the long-term economic future of our state. I want to thank bill sponsors Senator Ramos and Assemblymember Joyner, Senator Mayer, and all of the co-sponsors in the legislature for supporting this important piece of legislation and their commitment to economic justice for the hardworking individuals who are the backbone of our communities."

“New York’s minimum wage has serious impacts for many families, making it difficult to earn enough to put food on the table, make rent, and pay for utilities. These New Yorkers are the backbone of our communities, and raising the minimum wage affects all of us,” **said Assemblywoman Amy Paulin.** “With higher wages, workers would gain access to better childcare, healthcare, and education, allowing their families, and in turn our economy, to thrive. Now is the moment to pass the Raise the Wage Act to increase the minimum wage and lift up workers throughout New York State.”

“New Yorkers are facing a cost-of-living crisis. With record high costs families are not earning enough to meet their basic needs of food and housing. In Westchester County 20% of families are low income or in poverty. Forty percent of our neighbors live paycheck to paycheck. Families need the Raise the Wage Act to restore the minimum wage to \$21.25 and then index it going forward. We know what works; in these final days of budget negotiations, we are counting on our State leaders to get it done for our children and their families,” **said Allison Lake, Executive Director, Westchester Children’s Association, Member New York State’s Child Poverty Reduction Act Advisory Council.**

“As the CEO of YWCA of White Plains and Central Westchester, I stand with low-wage workers in stressing the importance of raising the minimum wage. No full-time worker should have to struggle to afford basic necessities like housing. This issue affects not only low-income individuals but also many women of color who are often forced to choose between their family's economic security and their health. Let us not forget the rising income inequality among Asians and other minoritized groups in this country, which highlights the urgent need for comprehensive solutions, beginning with raising the minimum wage. It's time for us to take bold steps toward economic justice and equity for all,” **said Tiffany Hamilton, CEO of the YWCA of White Plains and Central Westchester.**

“Paying employees a living wage is essential to ensuring that an organization can not only attract and retain qualified people, but that those people can also live in the communities where they work. In 2023, Westchester Library System chose to lead by example and implemented an internal minimum wage to ensure that all our employees could thrive in the communities in which they serve the public good. WLS is proud to support the millions of workers making between \$16 and \$20 an hour that would have a better opportunity to thrive, and live where they work with a \$21.25 minimum wage,” **said Rob Caluori, Chief Financial Officer, Westchester Library System (WLS).**

“I’ve been listening to trickle down economic theories for more decades than I care to count – it’s time we increased efforts to move the bottom up. And who’s at the bottom and would benefit from the increase? Not surprisingly, 55% of those benefiting would be women and 61% would be persons of color. Let me be very clear, increasing the minimum wage to \$21.25 is essential to reducing poverty while advancing gender and racial equity,” **said Carl La Horton, Executive Director of Hope’s Door.**

“Throughout Westchester County, low income families are facing a cost-of-living crisis. People often cannot afford to live anywhere near where they work, but then also struggle to pay for the cost of transportation. Many families are facing stark choices between paying rent or buying groceries. It is critically important that we recognize the value of all workers by raising New York’s minimum wage and indexing it to inflation. We should stand with workers who are the backbone of New York’s economy,” **said Robert Zumba, Worker Center Coordinator, Neighbors Link.**

[Watch the full press conference here.](#)