



September 2, 2025

Dear Legislators,

Working Wisconsin needs a raise and we need a living wage. Now more than ever we struggle with rising costs overwhelming family budgets. Housing, childcare and healthcare have become unaffordable while food and energy prices keep going up. For decades, real wages stagnated, and even declined for the growing low end of the labor market, eroding living standards and economic security while income inequality exploded.

No matter what jobs we have or where we live, every working person punching a clock to bring home a paycheck should be able to support ourselves and our families. It's time to make work pay for all of working Wisconsin. Our state's minimum wage fails to ensure all workers earn living wages.

Economists at MIT determined that in 2025 a living wage anywhere in Wisconsin starts at over \$20 per hour for a single adult working full-time, increasing for those with children. Today, over 800,000 Wisconsin workers, or nearly one third of our workforce, make less than \$20 per hour, according to the Economic Policy Institute.

For too long, policy-makers have allowed the bottom to fall out of the labor market on working Wisconsin, holding back all of us. At no point in our lifetimes has the minimum wage guaranteed Wisconsin workers enough to pay the bills. It's the time for policy-makers to act. Elected leaders have a duty to address the most fundamental issue for working people: we need living wages, and we need them now.

We call on you to draft and introduce, in collaboration with our coalition, comprehensive living wage legislation including the following elements:

- Establish a minimum wage of at least \$20 per hour, phased in as quickly as possible on a reasonable timeline
- Index minimum wage to inflation so that the rate does not erode over time

- Reduce the tip penalty for tipped workers, set at a reasonable rate
- Restore local control over minimum wage to municipal governments in order to address local labor market conditions

Our coalition stands ready to work with you not only to craft a bill but also to educate, mobilize and organize working people across the state to fight for living wage legislation. All labor has dignity and all workers deserve a living wage, and we call on you to join us to ensure government delivers policy that raises up Wisconsin's working class majority.

Sincerely,

Living Wage Coalition

Wisconsin Working Families Power, Citizen Action of Wisconsin, Our Wisconsin Revolution, Fighting Oligarchy Coalition, Milwaukee Area Service & Hospitality Workers Union