

May 01, 2025

Dear Member of Congress:

We, the undersigned organizations, write to express our strong support for the Raise the Wage Act of 2025. As lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) and allied organizations, we believe raising the minimum wage is a critical LGBTQ issue. We stand united with working-class Americans across the country in demanding action against income inequality and economic security for all. A \$17 minimum wage would improve the lives of all workers, including LGBTQ people and their families.

The Raise the Wage Act would gradually raise the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$17 by 2030.¹ After 2030, the minimum wage would be adjusted annually to keep pace with growth in the typical worker's wages.² In addition, the Act would phase out the subminimum wage for tipped workers, which has been stagnant at \$2.13 since 1991.³ It would also sunset the ability for employers to pay a subminimum wage to workers with disabilities⁴ and phase out the subminimum wage for workers under the age of 20.⁵

Considering the disproportionate rates of poverty among LGBTQ people, passing this measure is a critical priority for our community. Due to generational poverty⁶ and discrimination in areas such as employment, housing, education, LGBTQ individuals are more likely to be jobless, homeless, and poorer than the general population. Nearly 32 million workers⁷, 1.4 million of whom identify as LGBTQ⁸, would receive increased wages from the Act. A 2016 report found raising the minimum wage to \$15 would lift the incomes of 30,000 LGBTQ people in same-sex couples above the poverty level.⁹ This increase would have a profound impact on LGBTQ persons' ability to provide for their families. For transgender people, economic insecurity is a constant threat as it is for millions of Americans. In 2022, over one third (34%) of transgender survey respondents were living in poverty¹⁰, roughly three times more than the general U.S. population¹¹. A federal minimum wage of \$17 would directly improve the lives of transgender people living and working in low-wage states, which would in turn help to combat the financial

¹ Raise the Wage Act of 2025, 119th Cong. §2(a)(1), <https://edlabor.house.gov/imo/media/doc/Raise%20the%20Wage%20Bill%20Text1.pdf>.

² *Id.* at §2(b).

³ National Employment Law Project, "It's Time for the Raise the Wage Act of 2019" (2019), available at <https://www.nelp.org/publication/raise-wage-act-2019-letter-support/>.

⁴ Raise the Wage Act of 2025, 119th Cong. §6, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/582/text>.

⁵ *Id.* at §4.

⁶ Williams Institute, "Pathways Into Poverty: Lived Experiences Among LGBTQ People" (2020) available at <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/pathways-into-poverty/>.

⁷ Economic Policy Institute, "Why the U.S. needs a \$15 minimum wage: How the Raise the Wage Act would benefit U.S. workers and their families" (2021), <https://www.epi.org/publication/why-america-needs-a-15-minimum-wage/>.

⁸ Williams Institute, "Raising the Federal Minimum Wage" (2019), available at <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/raising-fed-min-wage-lgbt-adults/>.

⁹ Williams Institute, "The Impact of a \$15 Minimum Wage on Poverty Among Same Sex Couples" (2016), available at <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/impact-min-wage-ss-couples/>.

¹⁰ National Center for Transgender Equality, "Early Insights: A Report of the 2022 U.S. Transgender Survey" (2024), available at https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/2024-02/2022%20USTS%20Early%20Insights%20Report_FINAL.pdf.

¹¹ U.S. Census Bureau, "Poverty in the United States: 2023" (2024) available at <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/2024/demo/p60-283.pdf>.

effects of employment and housing discrimination. Despite recent cruel attacks on the transgender community that seek to pit transgender people against economic issues, transgender individuals benefit from policies that lift up all workers.

The bill would also have a profound impact on LGBTQ youth, who disproportionately make up between 30% and 40% of all homeless youth,¹² nearly half of whom (47%) are persons of color.¹³ Over half of homeless LGBTQ youth left or were forced out of their homes by their parents because of the youth's sexual orientation or gender identity, so a majority of LGBTQ homeless youth remain homeless for longer periods of time than non-LGBTQ homeless youth.¹⁴ Raising the federal minimum wage and phasing out the subminimum wage for workers under age 20 will help reduce homelessness among LGBTQ youth. Fair wages allow them to afford housing and achieve economic security independent of their families.

Additionally, the Act will have enormous impacts on LGBTQ people of color and LGBTQ women. 42% of the LGBTQ community identify as people of color.¹⁵ The Black Futures Lab found low wages are the biggest concern facing Black LGB people.¹⁶ Under the Act, 21% of Black workers and 17% of Latino/a workers will benefit.¹⁷ Women account for nearly 57% of the workers benefiting from an increased minimum wage.¹⁸ Women also account for 2/3 of the country's tipped workers, who are more than twice as likely to live in poverty than the rest of the workforce.¹⁹ LGBTQ women specifically are more likely than their non-LGBTQ counterparts to receive public assistance, be unemployed, and be near or under the poverty level.²⁰

Critics of raising the federal minimum wage have proposed instead that minimum wages should be established by region.²¹ However, a minimum wage of \$17 by 2030 is reasonable and realistic in any part of the U.S. In fact, 16 states (including Alaska, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Washington) have adopted laws that will establish a \$15 or higher minimum wage before 2030.²³ In particular, rural communities have a strong incentive to support

¹² Choi, Soon Kyu, et al., "Serving Our Youth" (2015) <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Serving-Our-Youth-June-2015.pdf>.

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ Williams Institute, "LGBT Demographic Data Interactive" (2019), available at

<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/visualization/lgbt-stats/?topic=LGBT#demographic>.

¹⁶ Black Futures Lab, "When the Rainbow is Not Enough: LGB+ Voices in the 2019 Black Census," available at <https://blackfutureslab.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/When-The-Rainbow-Is-Not-Enough.pdf>.

¹⁷ Economic Policy Institute, "The Impact of the Raise the Wage Act of 2025" (2025), available at <https://www.epi.org/publication/rtwa-2025-impact-fact-sheet/>.

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ Ruggles, S., Genadek, K., Goeken, R., and Soebek, M., Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC) "United analysis of American Community Survey (2016), Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 7.0 [dataset]" (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2017).

²⁰ Williams Institute, "Sexual Orientation and Sex Differences in Socioeconomic Status" (2018), available at <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/so-ses-diff-socioeconomic-status/>.

²¹ National Employment Law Project, "The Federal Minimum Wage Should be a Robust National Wage Floor, Not Adjusted Region by Region" (2019), available at <https://www.nelp.org/publication/federal-minimum-wage-robust-national-wage-floor-not-adjusted-region-region/>.

²³ National Employment Law Project, "Raises from Coast to Coast in 2025" (2024), available at <https://www.nelp.org/insights-research/raises-from-coast-to-coast-in-2025/>.

the Act because they are experiencing a housing affordability crisis in part due to stagnant incomes for the low- and moderate-income workers in those communities.²⁴

Additionally, the Act's plan to phase in the \$17 wage over five years allows time for lower-wage states and regions to adjust to the new wage.²⁵ Although opponents of the bill allege that small businesses do not benefit from raising the wage, at least 61% of American small business owners support raising the minimum wage.²⁶

The minimum wage has stagnated and left behind many workers, including LGBTQ people. As inflation remains a consistent threat to the cost of living throughout the country, raising the federal minimum wage to \$17 per hour is a significant step to lift LGBTQ families out of poverty. We, like all working-class Americans, want to care for our families and live without fear that we cannot meet our needs. The Raise the Wage Act takes a significant step toward building a future where everyone, LGBTQ or not, can participate in economic prosperity.

For these reasons, we support the Raise the Wage Act of 2025 and urge you to consider the enormous benefits this bill will bring to the LGBTQ community. LGBTQ workers need fair wages that allow them to feel secure and to take care of themselves and their families.

Sincerely,

Center for LGBTQ Economic Advancement & Research (CLEAR)
Diversity Center of Oklahoma, Inc.
Equality Illinois
Family Equality
GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ+ Equality
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
MomsRising
Movement Advancement Project
National Black Worker Center
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Council of Jewish Women
National Employment Law Project
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
Pride At Work, AFL-CIO
Raise The Floor Alliance
Transgender Law Center

²⁴ Aimee Picchi, "Housing's Hidden Crisis: Rural Americans Struggle to Pay Rent" (CBS News, 2019), https://www.cbsnews.com/news/housings-hidden-crisis-rural-americans-struggling-to-pay-the-rent/?fbclid=IwAR23-UF96fTDZe1_T4uddC7IE-RFtri02c57GSRE72QjHa_kRfFRbsPUlpo.

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ CNBC, "A Majority of America's Small Business Owners Support Minimum Wage Increase, Even As They Worry About Worker Affordability" (2024), available at <https://www.cnbc.com/2024/02/22/a-majority-of-americas-business-owners-support-minimum-wage-increase.html>; see also Sam Gutierrez, Survey Monkey, "CNBC|Survey Monkey Small Business Index Q1 2024" (2024), available at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/curiosity/cnbc-surveymonkey-small-business-index-q1-2024/>.