

Coalition for a Real Minimum-Wage Increase

Asian American Legal Defense & Education Fund, Chinese Staff & Workers Association,
Community Development Project – Urban Justice Center, Flushing Workers Center,
Hunger Action Network of New York State, MFY Legal Services, National Mobilization Against SweatShops

September 2, 2013

Governor Andrew Cuomo
Executive Chamber
Albany NY 12224

Re: Need for a Real Minimum Wage and a Minimum Wage Board

Dear Governor Cuomo:

As New Yorkers celebrate Labor Day and the contributions of working people, we urge your administration to take action to strengthen New York's minimum wage law and its enforcement.

First, we insist that you convene a minimum wage board as soon as possible. The Labor Department was required to convene the Board as part of the recently passed legislation on the minimum wage, but has yet to do so. Tipped workers in the Hospitality Industry should receive a hike in their minimum wage and no later than other workers, which is scheduled for the end of this year.

Second, we urge you to enact legislation to raise the minimum wage to at least \$10 in the coming year, and index it to inflation. The recent minimum wage increase to \$9 an hour over three years is not enough to enable households to support themselves as required by law.

Further, we hope that you will take the lead from seven other states such as California and provide tipped workers with the same minimum wage as other workers--without any reduction for tips. The family poverty rate for tipped workers is three times the rate for the workforce as a whole. And 72% of tipped workers are women.

Third, we call on you to repeal the minimum wage tax credit, which provides millions of dollars in subsidies to employers and corporations to hire 16- to 19-year olds, and put those resources into enforcement. The N.Y. Labor Department has told us there is a backlog of two years for such pay complaints from workers and a lack of resources. It is unacceptable that complaints for violations of minimum wage and overtime laws languish so long at the Department of Labor. Furthermore, any increase in the minimum-wage is meaningless without strengthening and enforcing the labor law.

Fourth, we ask that your administration adhere to the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL), and its goal of ensuring transparent government. The Urban Justice Center and members of our coalition submitted a FOIL request on May 28, 2013, to the Department of Labor seeking detailed documentation relating to the Department's wage enforcement policies, the resources it dedicates to wage enforcement, the backlog of investigations, and its effectiveness collecting unpaid wages. We are still awaiting an answer.

We hope that this Labor Day you will support working people and their families by addressing these concerns to help improve the working and living conditions of New Yorkers.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

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On behalf of the Campaign for a Real Minimum-Wage Increase

Other campaign endorsers (list in formation): Brandworkers, Damayan, Flushing Greens, Greater NY Labor-Religion Coalition, Jews for Racial & Economic Justice, Joy of Resistance, Multi-Cultural Feminist Radio (WBAI), Judeotutor Services (Rabbi Neal Kaunfer), Marc Landis, District Leader, New York State Labor-Religion Coalition, Occupy Albany, Presbyterian Church U.S.A., Ray Korona Band, St. Luke Lutheran Church, St. Raphael Parish Social Ministry, Systemic Disorder, Walker Memorial Baptist Church (Rev. Derrick Boykin), West Side Campaign Against Hunger, West-Park Presbyterian Church, Xavier Mission, 318 Restaurant Workers Union