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July 24, 2017

The Honorable Virginia Foxx  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Education and the Workforce  
2176 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Foxx:

We write to respectfully request that you convene a legislative hearing on H.R. 15, the *Raise the Wage Act*. Today marks the 8<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the last federally legislated increase in the minimum wage.<sup>1</sup> This means that those earning the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour (\$14,500 annually) have not received a raise since 2009. As you may know, the current minimum wage is \$5,000 below the poverty level for a family of three. A hearing on H.R. 15 would signal Congress' interest to work together on a bipartisan basis – just as we did in 2007 when Democrats controlled Congress and George W. Bush was President – to raise the minimum wage.

Historically, workers' wages and productivity grew together. Yet, in the last four decades working people's productivity has risen by over 70 percent, while their wages have only increased by 11 percent in the same period of time.<sup>2</sup> If wages had kept pace with workers' productivity, the lowest-paid working person would be making around \$19 per hour today.<sup>3</sup> Our Committee is uniquely positioned to act to help ensure that all working people earn a fair and decent wage – a wage that reflects their hard work.

H.R.15 would increase the federal minimum wage to \$15 over a seven year period— which provides a gradual phase-in to allow businesses to adjust to the increase. Further, H.R. 15 would result in more than 41 million low-wage workers receiving an increase in wages, according to the Economic Policy Institute.<sup>4</sup> The bill also indexes future minimum wage increases to the median wage growth of all workers to ensure that low-wage workers are not left behind when the economy is doing well. This provision also guarantees that low wage workers will no longer have to wait on Congress to act.

H.R. 15 also gradually eliminates the outdated tipped minimum wage, the youth wage, and the subminimum wage certificates for individuals with disabilities (as recommended by the

Honorable Virginia Foxx

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Advisory Committee on Increasing Competitive Integrated Employment for Individuals with Disabilities). The bill currently has 159 House cosponsors, including seventeen members of this Committee.

We have had the opportunity to work together this Congress on behalf of our nation's workforce and young people through H.R. 5323, Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act and H.R. 1809, the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2017. And just last week we came together to host a bipartisan panel on the business case for investing in opportunity youth. We should build on this progress and raise the minimum wage for millions of Americans who have disproportionately shouldered the weight of the recent economic depression.

Thank you for your attention and consideration of our request. We look forward to your response and continue to stand ready to work with you and our Republican Committee colleagues on this and other responsible solutions to help working people and restore balance to the economy.

Sincerely,

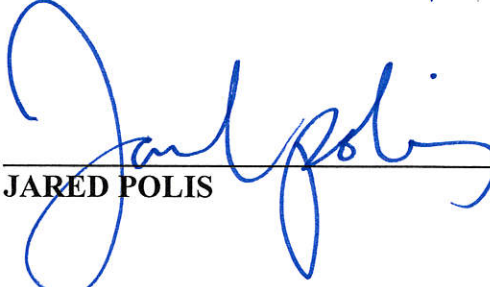
  
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**CAROL SHEA-PORTER**  
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**ADRIANO ESPAILLAT**  
Member of Congress

<sup>1</sup> In 2007, Congress passed the Fair Minimum Wage Act (Public Law 110-028). It raised the minimum wage from \$5.15 per hour to \$7.25 per hour in three increments. The last increment from \$6.55 to \$7.25 went into effect on July 24, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Economic Policy Institute. The Productivity-Pay Gap. August 2016. <http://www.epi.org/productivity-pay-gap/>