



January 25, 2021

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the two million members of the Service Employees International Union (“SEIU”), I write to urge you to **support the Raise the Wage Act**. For eight years, SEIU members, the Fight for \$15 & A Union movement, and working people across our country have taken to the streets to call for a \$15 an hour minimum wage and to have their voices heard in the workplace. Throughout this pandemic, working people have continued to step up, putting themselves and their families at risk to keep our communities safe, healthy, and fed. These essential workers have been hailed as heroes but too many are still being paid poverty wages and lack basic work protections like proper PPE, paid sick and family leave, or health care. They deserve an opportunity to earn a decent living and support their families. By ensuring a path to \$15 in every part of our country, Congress will make sure that everyone—no matter where they are from or what they look like—is closer to having what they need to get by. Raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour is one of the most important changes we can make in this country to lift up millions of workers and build back our economy better than it was before the pandemic began. This is a bipartisan solution that meets the moment of the crisis working people face. Airport workers, home care workers, child care providers, and all SEIU members are proud to stand with the Fight for \$15 and a Union in support of this legislation.

It has been more than ten years since Congress raised the federal minimum wage—the longest stretch in history. Currently, there is no place in America where a full-time worker making the federal minimum wage can afford rent and other basic essentials. While wealthy corporations have been handed tax cut after tax cut and profited throughout the pandemic from a soaring stock market, low-wage workers, many of whom were already struggling to make ends meet, have suffered the greatest share of pandemic-related job losses and wage cuts. For these workers, a \$15 federal minimum wage would be life-changing, lifting millions out of poverty, and helping to create an economy that values every worker and ensures no one working full time will live in poverty. It is no surprise that a strong majority of Americans support raising the minimum wage to \$15, including over 60% of Florida voters who just supported a ballot measure to raise the wage to \$15 an hour. President Biden has boldly acted to raise the wages of more than 700,000 federally contracted employees—including janitors, security officers, food service workers—who now have a path to at least \$15 an hour. It is time that Congress acts to do the same for every worker in the United States.

The overwhelming share of low-wage earners would unambiguously benefit from a \$15 minimum wage, but enactment of this bill is particularly critical for women who make up nearly two-thirds of the workforce earning the federal minimum wage or just above it, as well as Latinx and black workers. Currently, black workers are significantly overrepresented in states where the minimum wage has stayed at \$7.25 an hour. Many of the same states with low minimum wages also have so-called “Right-to-Work” provisions that weaken collective bargaining and the voice of working people. These same jurisdictions are also often places where Medicaid has not been expanded, and pre-emption laws block many localities from raising the minimum wage. Underpaid people in these regions and across the country are

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depending on Congress to take immediate action to raise the wage and set a universal standard to ensure that everyone—no matter what they look like or where they live—can earn enough to pay the bills and put food on the table.

People like Terrence Wise, a worker at a McDonald's in Kansas City, Missouri, have been on the front lines fighting for a \$15/hour minimum wage knowing it would be transformative for him and his family. In his own words: "Just like me, a lot of folks in fast-food work two or more jobs because pay is so low. What if every U.S. worker just had to work one job, and that was enough to make ends meet? I want to know that when I get my paycheck, it'll be enough to pay the rent, feed my kids and keep the lights on -- and maybe even a little extra, like enough to take my girls out to ice cream. It's not a lot to ask of Congress, and it would change the lives of millions of workers like me. It would give us a fair shot at the American dream we all hear so much about."

We urge Congress to heed the call to action from workers like Terrence Wise, and raise the wage so that millions of working people can be paid enough to lead a decent life, provide for their family and build a better future during the pandemic and beyond. **SEIU strongly urges you to support the Raise the Wage Act. We will add any future votes on this legislation to our legislative scorecard.** If you have any questions, please reach out to Jaya Chatterjee at jaya.chatterjee@seiu.org or (202) 372-7258.

Sincerely,



Mary Kay Henry
International President

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