



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Raise the wage: \$15 minimum wage would benefit 1 million working Ohioans

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Thousands of Ohioans of all walks of life work hard but don't take home enough to cover the basics. They need a raise. From food processing workers who help us get dinner on the table to the childcare workers who keep our kids safe while we're at work, we rely on some of the lowest-paid workers in the state. Yet Ohio's minimum wage is too low to cover the basic cost of living, and too low to reflect the value of work done by Ohioans in low-paying jobs. An Ohioan with a family of three who works full time and is paid the minimum wage earns \$21,736 a year, which falls \$4,084 short of the poverty level.

A coalition of community groups and organized labor led by One Fair Wage has filed a ballot proposal to raise the Ohio minimum wage to \$15 per hour in two steps by 2026, and phase out the sub-minimum wage employers can pay tipped workers by 2029. Ending separate treatment for tipped workers, youth, and workers with a disability is a critical part of the policy solution. If the measure passes, tipped workers will earn the full minimum wage with tips on top.

Key findings

- Raising Ohio's minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2026 will benefit nearly 1 million working Ohioans: 19% of the Ohio workforce. This includes 470,000 who are currently paid less than \$15 who will receive a direct benefit, and 500,000 currently paid up to \$17.25, who will get a raise as employers adjust pay scales.
- Raising the minimum wage will generate \$2 billion in new annual earnings by 2026.
- The average affected worker will take home an additional \$2,128 each year. That's \$3,400 for the lowest-paid Ohioans who will see a direct increase, and \$1,911 for those already paid a little more.
- Three in five of the people whose pay will go up are women. Raising the wage will reduce gender pay inequity.
- The raise will benefit Ohioans of all races and reduce race-based pay inequity: While 70% of those who will benefit are white, a larger share of Black (30%), Latine (30%) and workers of other races (33%) are paid low wages and will get a raise, along with 17% of white workers and 16% of Asian Ohioan workers.
- Most affected workers are adults aged 20+ (80%) who have already finished high school (80%). More parents will benefit from the ballot measure than teens.

This year's ballot measure is not the first time Ohio voters have stepped in to boost languishing wages when state legislators would not. Ohio voters recognize the need for stronger wages. In 2006, voters set Ohio's minimum wage to \$6.85, and indexed it to inflation so it would retain its purchasing power over time, resetting this January to \$10.45. That wise measure forestalled the possibility that policymakers would tacitly devalue the wage over time by letting inflation shrink its buying power. However, by the time voters took action, the wage had already been pushed down: The minimum wage in Ohio and the nation peaked half a century ago in 1968 and was worth \$14 per hour in today's terms.

Everyone who works deserves the security of knowing they can take care of themselves and their families. Passing a livable minimum wage is a vital step toward making that a reality.