



# Workers' Rights



**NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNCIL OF CHURCHES**

# Faith and Workers

What scripture says about workers:

- Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. Romans 4:4
- Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness, and his upper rooms by injustice; who makes his neighbors work for nothing, and does not give them their wages. Jeremiah 22:13
- Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. James 5:4



## The Council's View on Workers

The message from the Hebrew scriptures and New Testament on the dignity of work is clear – **those who labor deserve to be treated with respect.** As with most justice issues, the Biblical witness around economic oppression was radical at the time and crucial for today, driven by a call for fairness and equity.

The North Carolina Council of Churches has been a steadfast advocate for the need to raise the minimum wage and support working families for a significant period of time. Recognizing the inherent value of hard work and the fundamental importance of economic stability, the Council has consistently emphasized that full-time workers should be able to provide basic support for their families. We firmly believe that no individual should be trapped in a cycle of poverty, struggling to make ends meet despite their dedicated efforts. In line with these principles, the Council urges the N.C. General Assembly to take the recommended steps towards increasing the minimum wage and passing family-friendly workplace policies, as it would provide vital support for working families, fostering a more just and equitable society for all.

# Facts about N.C. Workers



Nearly 1 in 3 workers in NC earn a wage below the federal poverty line - the second worst in the nation. <sup>1</sup>

## 967,300

WORKING NORTH CAROLINIANS EARN LESS THAN \$15/HOUR.<sup>2</sup>

NORTH CAROLINA LAST RAISED ITS MINIMUM WAGE IN

## 2008<sup>3</sup>

Since 2016, **13** local governments across NC have agreed to offer paid parental leave<sup>4</sup>

MORE THAN  
**A MILLION WORKERS**  
IN NC HAVE NO OPPORTUNITY TO EARN  
**PAID SICK LEAVE**<sup>5</sup>

## LOW-INCOME WORKERS

(disproportionately women and workers of color) are significantly less likely to have earned paid sick days<sup>6</sup>

There are nearly **1.2 million family caregivers** in North Carolina providing care to their elders, relatives with disabilities and children with chronic disease.<sup>7</sup>

Care for a sibling, grandparent, grandchild, parent-in-law—anyone other than a child, parent or spouse—is not covered under the Family and Medical Leave Act.

**Providing expanded family and medical leave, paid sick leave, and increasing the minimum wage is good for workers, good for businesses, and good for the economy. Working North Carolinians deserve access to jobs that are fair, just, and secure.**



# Passing Workplace Policies

North Carolina's minimum wage needs to meet the rising cost of living and basic needs. Increasing the minimum wage is vital to ensure equitable compensation that genuinely mirrors the prevailing cost of living, thereby offering the necessary support to workers.

The implementation of paid sick day policies has proven to be successful in numerous regions across the country, yielding benefits for workers, families, employers, and public health alike. Employers who provide paid sick days experience advantages such as decreased turnover rates, heightened productivity, and a reduced risk of contagion within the workplace.

Regrettably, a significant proportion of North Carolina's workforce lacks access to paid leave in the event of medical emergencies. While some employees have the option of taking unpaid leave through the Family and Medical Leave Act, many are ineligible, and others need financial compensation to afford to take time off.

It is time to address the need for fair minimum wages, paid sick days, and paid family and medical leave, all with the goal of creating a more equitable and prosperous society for all residents of the state.

## Proposed solutions:

- Raise the state minimum wage
- Index the state minimum wage to the cost of living
- Give workers 7 paid sick days each year
- Allow workers access to paid time off for parental leave, medical leave, and to care for a family member



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1, 2, 3. Raising Wages NC. Wages Wednesday

4. NC Paid Leave Action Network, Fact Sheet: Local Governments and Employees, 2020

5, 6. NC Paid Leave Action Network, Fact Sheet: Paid Sick Leave, 2020

7. NC Paid Leave Action Network, Fact Sheet: FMLA Is Not Enough, 2020

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