



NEWS RELEASE

HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL

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Howard County Council Passes Landmark Minimum Wage Legislation

Ellicott City, MD (December 7, 2021) – On December 6, the Howard County Council voted to pass Council Bill 82-2021, legislation that will improve and strengthen the local minimum wage in Howard County, Maryland. The legislation, sponsored by Councilmembers Opel Jones and Christiana Rigby, will gradually raise Howard County's minimum wage from its current rate of \$11.75 per hour to \$16 per hour over the next several years. After several hours of discussion and voting, CB82-2021 was passed by the County Council in a 4-1 vote.

The Howard County legislation authored by Councilmembers Jones and Rigby will strengthen the local minimum wage beyond state requirements by (1) increasing the minimum wage, (2) accelerating the timeline for implementation, (3) implementing an annual wage adjustment to account for inflation, and (4) requiring the County Council to evaluate the local minimum wage and cost of living at least once every four years.

According to the [Maryland Center for Economic Policy](#), Council Bill 82-2021 will benefit one in four employees who work in Howard County, which equates to 40,000 working people. These employees will see their earnings increase in a meaningful way, allowing working families to save for homeownership, retirement, and education, as well as put money right back into the local economy.

"The impact of this legislation will relieve a financial burden for thousands of low-wage workers, moreover it will benefit 25% of the county's Asian and Pacific Islander workers, 30% of the county's working women, 33% of the county's African American workers, 51% of the county's Latinx workers, and 75% of workers in low-income families," said **Councilmember Opel Jones**. "Leading and legislating through an equitable lens by not delaying economic justice and prosperity for one out of four families who may struggle to provide adequate housing, proper clothing, and food for their families is paramount! As a recommendation from the Racial Equity Task Force, I am humbled by the passage of Council 82-2021, and thrilled to earn the support from residents and of our advocate community!"

"This legislation is a strong step toward a more equitable and livable wage for working families in Howard County. Raising the minimum wage means that fewer workers will have to decide between paying for groceries and paying for rent," said **Councilwoman Christiana Rigby**. "I am appreciative of

Howard County's Racial Equity Task Force, which highlighted strengthening the minimum wage as a key recommendation in its Final Report. I am also deeply grateful to the broad coalition of community organizations and leaders for their support on this important piece of legislation."

"Living Wage Howard County celebrates the passage of CB82-2021 as a significant first step toward economic justice for Howard County's low-wage frontline workers," said **Kelly Klinefelter Lee, Chairperson of Living Wage Howard County**. "We will continue to seek new partners and educate our community about the benefits to our neighborhoods, schools, families, and businesses of providing a living wage to all workers."

Alissa Barron-Menza, Vice President of Business for a Fair Minimum Wage, said, "Raising Howard County's minimum wage makes good sense for business. It's bad for businesses and communities when working people can't make ends meet. Minimum wage increases will boost the consumer buying power that businesses depend on to survive and grow. This legislation will help workers and businesses recover from the pandemic and thrive in the future."

Brian England, owner of BA Auto Care in Columbia, whose awards include Best of Howard County and Maryland Small Business of the Year, said, "This legislation will greatly help our local recovery, as needed minimum wage raises go right back into businesses and the community. We know from experience that paying employees fair wages is good for business. What we've paid in higher compensation, we have more than reaped in low employee turnover, long-term loyalty, excellent service, and high numbers of return customers and referrals."

The proposed legislation was pre-filed on October 6, 2021 and was introduced at the Council Legislative Session on November 1, 2021. After a Public Hearing and a Work Session on the legislation in the month of November, CB82-2021 was voted on during the Council's Legislative Session on December 6, 2021.

To read the legislation and amendments, please visit this website: [CB82-2021](#).

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