



NEWS RELEASE

HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL

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Councilmembers Join Community Leaders to Announce Introduction of Minimum Wage Legislation

Ellicott City, MD (November 2, 2021) – On November 1, Howard County Councilmembers Opel Jones and Christiana Rigby joined a broad coalition of community leaders and organizations to announce the introduction of legislation to strengthen Howard County’s minimum wage. The legislation (CB82-2021) would 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.

The Howard County legislation proposed by Councilmembers Jones and Rigby would 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) require the County Council to reassess and evaluate the local minimum wage every four years.

“Council Bill 82-2021 will be the most progressive phase-in structure in Maryland and one of the first pieces of legislation to reach a rate of \$16 on the East Coast,” said **Councilmember Opel Jones**. “To accomplish this legislative milestone, our legislation mirrors the state’s minimum wage bill with an accelerated phase-in approach that could be a national model to improve the minimum wage.”

“Our current minimum wage does not adequately address the rising costs that families are facing for basic needs such as housing, childcare, utilities, groceries, and other expenses in Howard County,” said **Councilwoman Christiana Rigby**. “A higher minimum wage will put more money into the pockets of working families who need it most. It’s good for our community, it’s good for our economy, and it’s simply the right thing to do.”

“The Living Wage Howard County coalition is here for the long term, to educate and activate the public about this urgent need for a higher wage for our Howard County essential workers and press elected officials to create public policy that serves the needs of the entire community,” said **Kelly Klinefelter Lee, Chairperson of Living Wage Howard County**.

“Strengthening the minimum wage is the right choice for Howard County workers and for the local economy. Once fully phased in, this bill will boost paychecks for 40,000 workers, with a cumulative impact of more than \$160 million by 2025,” said **Christopher Meyer, Research Analyst with the**

Maryland Center on Economic Policy. “Women and workers of color will see especially large gains. Higher wages will help families afford necessities like food and housing, strengthen sales at local businesses, and put Howard County’s children on a path to long-term success. “

“Howard County is a wealthy county yet a large portion of employees, including many in our own School System, must cobble together full, part time and gig work to meet rising prices. This negatively effects our students, families, and employees,” said **Colleen Morris, President of the Howard County Education Association.** “However, this long-awaited bill will make substantive steps toward allowing for one job that provides a living wage and benefits for all workers creating better lives, communities, and futures.”

Alissa Barron-Menza, Vice President of Business for a Fair Minimum Wage, said, “This legislation to raise Howard County’s minimum wage is very timely. It’s bad for businesses when working people can’t afford the basics. Raising the minimum wage puts money in the pockets of people who most need to spend it. And it encourages the kind of fair pay business model that will help workers, businesses and communities recover from the pandemic and thrive in the future.”

Brian England, owner of BA Auto Care in Columbia, said, “As BA Auto Care has grown over the years, paying our employees fair wages and benefits has been central to our success. 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. Howard County’s minimum wage increases will greatly help our local recovery, as the needed pay raises go straight back into businesses and the community.” Mr. England has received numerous awards as a business owner, which include Best of Howard County and Maryland Small Business of the Year.

The proposed legislation was introduced at the Council Legislative Session on November 1, 2021. Public testimony will be accepted at a public hearing on Monday, November 15, 2021 at 7 PM. The legislation will be up for a vote at the Council Legislative Session on Monday, December 6, 2021.

Howard County residents can sign up to provide testimony either virtually or in-person by visiting this [website](#). Residents may also submit written testimony by emailing CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov.

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

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