

Submitted Testimony

Joint Legislative Public Budget Hearing
Workforce Development
February 3, 2016
Addie Davis, Poughkeepsie, New York

Good afternoon members of the Assembly and Senate. I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to tell you why I support the Governor's budget proposal to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour.

My name is Addie Davis. I live in Poughkeepsie, New York and I work in New Paltz as a C.N.A. (certified nursing assistant) at the Mountain View Nursing and Rehab Center. Right now I'm living pay check to pay check. I have to work 50-55 hours a week so there is enough money to pay bills. Nothing fancy – I need to pay rent, and a health insurance premium, not to mention bills for electricity and of course heat in the winter.

At just over \$12 an hour, I don't have enough to pay those bills and support my family. I make more than today's minimum wage, but if I can't make it on \$12, how can anyone possibly live on \$9 an hour?

Our income has gone up much too slowly, and it never keeps up with the real cost to live or raise a family. We have struggled, but I'm sad to say that our children are having even a harder time of it and that worries me. I want life to be better for them.

Right now I'm looking for a second job and my plan is to take on another shift at a different nursing home. My children tell me I look tired, but it doesn't matter that I'm exhausted all the time – I have no choice.

I hardly get a chance to spend time with my family—my children and now my young grandchildren. I should be able to help my own kids and see my grandchildren grow up. Don't get me wrong – I do love the work I do, but I feel like I'm taking care of other people's families and not taking good enough care of my own.

If the minimum wage increases to \$15 an hour, I could work fewer hours. I also might have some money left over after the necessities are paid for. That would be the case for me and many people I know who are also making low, below market wages. If we all had some extra money, we would most likely spend it near our homes or work -- in Poughkeepsie or New Paltz or somewhere in the Hudson Valley. That would help the businesses in our area. I think that's why even though you hear some business opposition to raising the minimum wage, most of the smaller businesses that I know support the increase, because they know when people can spend more, business is good.

Please do the right thing and increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour for all working people. And in particular, for all of us dedicated nursing home workers, please ensure that the Medicaid budget is properly funded, so that nursing home workers like me will be able to make enough money so that we can do the jobs we love and also provide for our families.

Thank you.
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