

# Sens. Hansen, Johnson and Rep. Subeck: Introduce Local Wage Act

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MADISON – Today, Representative Lisa Subeck (D-Madison), Senator Dave Hansen (D-Green Bay), and Senator LaTonya Johnson (D-Milwaukee) introduced the *Local Wage Act* which would repeal state statutes that prohibit local governments from establishing a local minimum wage and enacting local family and medical leave standards. They were joined by advocates, workers, and local elected officials at a press conference to announce the legislation.

One in four Wisconsinites works a job that pays a poverty level wage.<sup>1</sup> While the cost of living continues to increase, workers are held captive by a \$7.25 an hour minimum wage that is not tied to inflation and has not seen an increase since 2009. “No one who works hard should have to be poor, nor should any working person have to choose between their health or the health of a loved one and their job,” said Rep. Subeck. “In the hands of Republicans, state government has failed its citizens by not raising wages and not addressing a lack of guaranteed paid leave. It is time to restore the ability of local elected officials to set wage floors that are reflective of the cost of living in their communities and to address the challenges faced by workers who need to take time off when they or their children are ill.” Based on cost of living measures, an individual living in Fond du Lac would need to earn 4.4% more than someone living in Wisconsin Rapids or Marshfield. A person living in the Madison area would have to make an additional 8.4% versus one living in Fond du Lac.<sup>2</sup>

“There is a cost of living difference between Madison and Marshfield, and local governments should have the ability to set wage floors accordingly,” said Sen. Hansen. “With this bill we can ensure that no matter where you live, you will not work 40 hours a week and live in poverty.”

While federal and state law provide unpaid family and medical leave protections to some employees, 40% of workers do not have access to a single day of paid leave, and many have no access to any paid or unpaid leave at all. Currently, in Wisconsin, local units of government are preempted by state statute from enacting an ordinance guaranteeing workers have access to paid leave.

In the last 10 years, more than 30 state and local laws have been enacted to guarantee some amount of paid family and medical leave or sick time to workers. Cities like Chicago, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, St. Paul, San Diego and Morristown, New Jersey have enacted local standards.

“Hardworking Wisconsinites should not have to choose between keeping their job and taking time off for a new baby, to care for a seriously ill child or parent, or to recover from an illness themselves,” said Sen. Johnson. “The state shouldn’t be restricting local governments from ensuring employees have time off, we should be encouraging it.”