

Rep. Cruz: Time to deliver a living wage for Wisconsin

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Madison – Rep. Angelina Cruz today introduced legislation to raise the state’s minimum wage to a living wage. Under this bill, the minimum wage would increase to \$15 per hour upon enactment, then rise by \$1.25 annually until it reaches \$20 per hour in 2030. After that, it would be indexed to inflation. The tipped wage would increase to 50% of the minimum wage, and creates a slower phase-in schedule for small businesses with 50 or fewer employees.

“It should shock us all that Wisconsin’s minimum wage has remained stagnant at \$7.25 per hour since 2009,” Rep. Cruz stated. “In the 17 years since the federal minimum was set at that level, costs have soared. Wisconsin workers deserve far more than a poverty wage.”

“The rising cost of basic necessities including housing, food, and health care undermines the stability of our workers, families, and communities. While rising costs continue to receive attention – as they should, suppressed wages require our attention as well,” Cruz noted. “I am proud to introduce this legislation and to continue pushing wages to the forefront of the affordability conversation. We must not allow the hard-working people of our state to be paid poverty wages.”

The bill also restores local control, allowing communities to set higher standards if they choose. The cost of living varies dramatically across our state. MIT’s Living Wage Calculator estimates a living wage of \$20.96 per hour for a single adult with no children statewide. That amount is higher in metro areas such as Madison, Milwaukee, and Waukesha.

There is also an economic benefit to wider communities, as workers have more purchasing power, and to the state, which relies on revenue from income taxes.

Rep. Cruz pointed to broad support in the Assembly for a living wage. “I’m proud to be joined by more than 30 of my Democratic colleagues in introducing this legislation. We are serious about creating the conditions under which working people and our communities can thrive.”