

Rep. Rivera-Wagner: Introduces plan to raise Wisconsin minimum wage to \$20, says “hard work should be enough”

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Green Bay lawmaker calls for first wage increase in 17 years, ties proposal to affordability crisis facing working families

GREEN BAY, WI — State Representative Amaad Rivera-Wagner (D-Green Bay) today introduced legislation to raise Wisconsin’s minimum wage for the first time in 17 years, calling it “a long overdue raise for the people who power our economy.” Wisconsin’s minimum wage has remained at \$7.25 per hour since 2009. Tipped workers earn just \$2.33 per hour.

Green Bay was recently ranked the number one place to live in America, in part because of our affordability and strong sense of community. But that affordability is becoming harder to maintain. Across Brown County and throughout all 72 counties, working families are juggling multiple jobs just to stay afloat.

“At a time when workers are the most productive in history and profits are at record highs, seven dollars and twenty five cents an hour cannot pay the monthly bills in Green Bay or anywhere in Wisconsin,” said Rep. Rivera-Wagner. “Hard work should be enough. If you are good enough to work in Wisconsin, you should be paid enough to live in Wisconsin.” Rivera-Wagner added: “We cannot call ourselves the best place to live if the people who live and work here cannot afford to stay.”

Rivera-Wagner also addressed the Legislature’s early adjournment. “The majority party chose to end session nearly ten months early,” he said. “But rent did not

pause. Groceries did not pause. Child care costs did not pause. In Green Bay, if you stop showing up for ten months, you do not keep your job. We were elected to show up and do the work.”

The legislation establishes:

- An immediate increase to \$15 per hour for most workers
- Gradual annual increases reaching \$20 per hour by 2030 for large employers
- A longer ramp up period for employers with 50 or fewer employees
- An increase in the tipped minimum wage from \$2.33 to \$7.50 upon enactment, with gradual increases thereafter
- Annual inflation adjustments beginning in 2031 to prevent wages from losing value over time
- The ability for local governments to enact their own minimum wage ordinances

More than one million Wisconsin workers earn less than \$20 per hour, many serving in essential roles such as home health care, early childhood education, grocery, retail, and nursing assistants.

For Rivera-Wagner, the issue is deeply personal. “I was raised by a teenage single mother. For much of my earliest life, we experienced homelessness even though my mom worked multiple jobs,” he said. “I know what it feels like when hard work falls short because wages and benefits do not match the effort. What changed our lives was access to a home and a union job that gave my mother her first living wage. Every family in Green Bay deserves that same shot.”

“This bill is about dignity, responsibility, and respect for work,” Rivera-Wagner said. “Green Bay families helped make our city the best place to live in America. They deserve to afford to live here. If you work full time in Wisconsin, you should not be struggling to survive. We can and should get back to work solving real problems.”