

April 24, 2016

Dear City Manager Augustus, Mayor Petty and City Councilors,

Every day we work with people who are struggling here in Worcester. We provide services to countless families and individuals fighting to avoid homelessness, struggling with hunger and fighting foreclosure and debt.

In our daily work at Worcester's soup kitchens, food pantries, shelters and service agencies we assist families, youth, veterans, people with disabilities, and seniors to negotiate these struggles. At the root of many of their problems is an inability to make ends meet. Many of those we serve are counted among the working poor, people with minimum wage jobs where the low-wages do little to aid families escape poverty. Additionally, for many people, the inability to access good-paying jobs is compounded by a variety of factors such as lack of reliable or no transportation, lack of affordable childcare, employment discrimination, language barriers, or a shortage of available skill-building training programs. The existence of these multiple and complex barriers is a reminder that for people in our community, especially for people of color, women and low-income individuals, dealing with poverty is a chronic and daily stressor.

If people were paid more than the current minimum wage we would have less hunger, less homelessness, fewer foreclosures and personal bankruptcies in Worcester. **For this simple reason, we support the Worcester Community-Labor Coalition's campaign calling for developers that receive tax breaks in our City to agree to hire Worcester residents at a \$15/hr minimum wage.**

Advocating for \$15 an hour jobs is not a unrealistic request, neither is it a demand that aims to impact businesses in a negative way; it is a common-sense ask that people in our community have the opportunity to earn enough to afford to feed their families, increase savings, reduce debts, invest in their children's education, and work towards homeownership. Higher wages support local economic development, as workers have more money to spend in the local market.

In 2015, Gov. Baker negotiated a \$15 minimum wage for Medicaid-funded home care workers in Massachusetts. New York approved a statewide \$15 minimum wage for fast food workers. Similarly, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle have citywide \$15 minimum wages that apply to all workers.<sup>1</sup> It is time that we join in this movement to build pathways out of poverty.

Fighting for local jobs that pay a livable wage is a fight we all must be willing to get behind on behalf of our clients, friends and neighbors, whom we know are hardworking, smart, committed community members who want to build a brighter future for themselves and their families.

We pledge our support to reducing hunger, homelessness, foreclosures and personal debt in Worcester and encourage our elected officials to strongly consider the call for a local hiring and a \$15 minimum wage requirement in TIF deals negotiated by our City.

Sincerely,

Dismas House of Central Massachusetts  
EPOCA – Ex-Prisoners & Prisoners Organizing for Community Advancement  
Friendly House Neighborhood Center  
Friendly House Shelter  
Green Island Neighborhood Center  
Jeremiah's Inn  
Mustard Seed  
Pernet Family Health

Pleasant St. Neighborhood Network Center  
Regional Environmental Council  
Shalom Neighborhood Center  
South Worcester Neighborhood Improvement Corp.  
St. Francis & Therese Catholic Worker  
WAFT - Worcester Anti-Foreclosure Team  
Worcester County Food Bank  
Worcester Food Policy Council

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<sup>1</sup> "14 Cities and States Approved \$15 Minimum Wage in 2015" <http://www.nelp.org/news-releases/14-cities-states-approved-15-minimum-wage-in-2015/>