

April 21, 2016

Dear City Manager Augustus, Mayor Petty and City Councilors,

As religious leaders and communities of faith in Worcester we wish to support the call for our City to ask developers that receive major tax breaks to come to our City in return agree to hire local residents from our community and pay them a livable wage of \$15/hour.

Our congregations, pews and prayer groups are comprised of hard working women, men and youth that are committed to making Worcester their home. And among these people, are some who become forced to step forward, and quietly say, "I need help." "I'm hungry." "I'm about to become homeless."

Today, our economy does not provide for everyone. Finding a good paying job is not easy. Finding a job with benefits that allows one to care for their family doesn't always happen. Finding a job that allows a single mother to keep up on the rent, pay for food, keep the heat on, cover expenses at school for the children and save a little to purchase a house remains more of a dream than a reality for far too many families.

We believe we need to create an economy that serves all of those that work in that economy. We believe that everyone that works 40 hours or more in our City should be receiving a livable wage. And in order for this to happen, we believe that when our city plans and evaluates new economic development opportunities, together we must also be asking, "Does this economic development help our neighbors?"

We do not think it is too big of a hurdle or discouragement to ask developers that are the recipients of million dollar tax breaks from our community to make a commitment to hiring women, people of color, youth and low-income residents from the Worcester community. Nor do we think it is too big of a request to ask that these same recipients of tax breaks pay these workers a livable wage of \$15/hour.

The people we assist and frequently pray for, are hard-working families. If our neighbors were paid more than the minimum wage their lives would be very different. Worcester could be very different.

Advocating for \$15 an hour jobs is not unrealistic, neither is it a demand that aims to impact businesses in a negative way. It is our moral duty to ask that people in our community have the opportunity to earn enough to feed their families, not fear homelessness, have their health needs met, are able to increase savings, reduce debts, invest in their children's education, and eventually work towards homeownership.

We applaud Worcester's effort to be a leader in finding ways to interrupt the cycle of poverty. We fully support the Worcester Community-Labor Coalition's campaign for local jobs that pay above the minimum wage. It is the moral thing to do. These changes will not retard economic development as some have claimed, but instead will bring new opportunities, new hope and life sustaining changes for the residents of our community.

We encourage our elected leaders to pray and consider creating a local hiring and a \$15 minimum wage requirement in TIF deals negotiated by our City.

Sincerely,

1. Worcester Friends Meeting
2. Worcester Interfaith
3. Worcester Latino Ministers Alliance
4. Rev. Clyde Talley Belmont AME Zion
5. Rev. William Almeyda Centro de Adoracion
6. Rev. Mauricio Ramirez Centro Cristiano Betesda
7. Rev. Frank Montes Centro Cristiano Fey y Gracias
8. Rev. Jose Encarnacion Christian Community Church
9. Rabbi Aviva Fellman Congregation Beth Israel
10. Rev. Carla Dietz Greendale Peoples Church
11. Rev. Asael Baez Iglesia Nueva Generación
12. Rev. Capt. Alberto Fonseca Iglesia Nueva Vida (Salvation Army)
13. Rev. Tom Sparling Journey Community Church
14. Rev. Lou Soiles Journey Community Church
15. Rev. Oscar Amparo Ministerios la Trinidad
16. Rev. Esau Vance Mt. Olive United Pentecostal
17. Rev. Charles F. Monroe Our Lady of the Angels
18. Rev. Susan Nachtigal Trinity Lutheran
19. Rev. Bobby Murrieta Triumphant Life Church - Worcester
20. Rev. Aaron Payson Unitarian Universalist Church of Worcester
21. Rev. Nancy Elder-Wilfrid United Congregational Church of Worcester
22. Rev. Lucas Glenn The Woo
23. Clarence Burley Worcester Friends Meeting
24. Sister Marie Therese Martin
25. Rev. Marisol Martinez