

Chairperson and Members of the Industry, Business and Labor Committee,

My name is Zoe Absey and I am here today to advocate for an increase in North Dakota's minimum wage from \$7.25 an hour to \$9.25 an hour. While many businesses in our state may already pay above the current minimum wage, the fact remains that \$7.25 an hour is still legal—and it is not a livable wage.

At \$7.25 an hour, a full-time worker putting in 40 hours per week earns only \$15,080 per year before taxes. That is simply not enough to afford basic necessities like rent, groceries, childcare, or transportation. In North Dakota, where the cost of living continues to rise, expecting individuals to survive on this wage is unrealistic and unjust.

We also know that we want to keep people in North Dakota, if we want to fill essential jobs in customer service, retail, and manual labor, we must pay workers fairly. This proposed increase would provide North Dakotans with better financial stability while still allowing businesses flexibility. It ensures that we are getting closer to no worker in our state being left struggling on an outdated and insufficient wage.

When our neighbors earn more, they are better able to support themselves and their families, which in turn strengthens our communities and local economies. I urge you to support this increase because no one working full-time should be living in poverty. North Dakota must do better, and this is a step in the right direction.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Zoe Absey