

Chair Warrey and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of HCR 3032 to raise the minimum wage in the state. When I started working at 15, nearly 10 years ago, the minimum wage was in line with the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour. Neither the federal minimum wage or North Dakota's minimum wage has changed in an entire decade. Those wages actually haven't been updated since 2009, now almost 16 years ago. With the yearly increases in cost of living and inflation in the country over that period of time, the purchasing power of the minimum wage has significantly decreased:

“The value of the federal minimum wage has reached its lowest point in 66 years, according to an EPI analysis of recently released Consumer Price Index (CPI) data. Accounting for price increases in June, the current federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour is now worth less than at any point since February 1956. At that time, the federal minimum wage was 75 cents per hour, or \$7.19 in June 2022 dollars.” -Economic Policy Institute

This has left our North Dakota families in the dust and forced them to take on multiple jobs at a time to live.

You might say “Well I live in (Bismarck/Fargo/Grand Forks/etc.) and it's impossible to find a job paying less than \$12, \$14, \$15 etc. per hour!” But this is not the case in rural towns. I graduated from LaMoure High School in District 28, and was paid \$7.50 per hour at my first job. When I got a different job that was only open from April 1 to September 30 every year, I started at \$8 per hour, then \$8.50 the next year, and \$9 the third year. As a high school student, that money wasn't bad, but it is now 7 years ago that I made \$9 per hour. Had I only made that much as an adult, the money would not have gone far. Small towns are, in some ways, more expensive than larger metros. Gas

and groceries have a significant markup in rural areas due to the transportation needs to get it there. So the money has even less purchasing power.

The fact of the matter is that while many urban area jobs pay more than federal minimum wage, rural ones don't always, and the money just doesn't stretch that far anymore. Our workers deserve to be paid a reasonable wage and be able to pay their bills without needing multiple jobs to make it work. This is an easy change to make for our state to support our workforce. Please vote in favor of HCR 3032.