

July 11, 2012

The Honorable George Miller
United States House of Representatives
2205 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Miller:

As organizations dedicated to protecting and advancing progress for women and their families, the undersigned write in strong support of the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2012. By gradually raising the federal minimum wage and the minimum cash wage for tipped workers closer to their historic levels and subsequently adjusting wages for inflation, this bill would take modest but crucial steps to promote economic security and fair pay for millions of women. And that is why the undersigned are joining with a broad coalition of workers' rights, faith, civil rights and labor partners to organize a public campaign in the months ahead to educate and mobilize around this critical issue.

Women represent nearly two-thirds of U.S. workers earning the minimum wage or less. Most of these women do not have a spouse's income to rely on, and many have families to support. But a woman working full time, year round at the current federal minimum wage of \$7.25 earns just \$14,500 — more than \$3,000 below the poverty line for a family of three. By raising the minimum wage to \$9.80 per hour in 2014, the Fair Minimum Wage Act would boost a minimum wage worker's annual earnings by \$5,100 per year, enough to pull a family of three out of poverty. And by indexing the minimum wage to keep pace with inflation, the Act would help prevent wages from sinking further relative to the cost of living.

Women also represent two-thirds of workers in tipped occupations, for whom the minimum cash wage has been frozen at \$2.13 per hour for more than 20 years. Restaurant servers, the largest group of tipped employees, experience poverty at nearly three times the rate of the workforce as a whole — and about 70 percent of servers are women. By gradually raising the tipped wage to 70 percent of the federal minimum wage, the Fair Minimum Wage Act recognizes that tipped workers can no longer be left behind.

According to the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), raising the minimum wage to \$9.80 per hour would boost earnings for more than 28 million workers, nearly 55 percent of them women. Increasing pay for this disproportionately female workforce would help to narrow the persistent gap between men's and women's typical earnings; in 2010, women working full time, year round were paid only 77 cents for every dollar paid to their male counterparts, and the gap was even wider for women of color.

Women across the country would benefit, too, from the lift to our economy that higher wages would provide. More money in workers' pockets means more dollars flowing into local businesses, and that means more jobs: according to EPI, raising the minimum wage to \$9.80 per hour over three years would generate about \$25 billion in economic activity and around 100,000 jobs.

Congress has raised the minimum wage only three times in the past 30 years. The time for the Fair Minimum Wage Act is now, and we greatly appreciate your efforts to advance this important legislation.

Sincerely,

9to5

9to5 Atlanta Working Women

9to5 Bay Area (CA)

9to5 Colorado

9to5 Los Angeles

9to5 Milwaukee

A Better Balance

American Association of University Women (AAUW)

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees

American Federation of Teachers

Clearinghouse on Women's Issues

Coalition of Labor Union Women

Community Action Partnership

Digital Sisters

First Focus Campaign for Children

Florida Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Inc.

Jewish Women International

Missouri Jobs with Justice

National Association of Working Women

National Conference of Puerto Rican Women, Inc.

National Council of Jewish Women

National Council of Women's Organizations

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund

National Organization for Women

National Partnership for Women & Families

National Women's Law Center

Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc.

Project Single Moms Worldwide, Inc.

Public Justice Center

Restaurant Opportunities Centers United

Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law

Turning Anger into Change

Washington Area Women's Foundation

Wider Opportunities for Women

Women's City Club of New York

Women Employed

Women's Foundation for a Greater Memphis

Women's Foundation of California

Women's Intercultural Network (WIN)

Women's Media Center

YWCA USA

YWCA Greater Milwaukee