



## **Minimum wage: Should it be \$14.20 in Upstate New York?**

Rebecca Swift

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### **National Employment Law Project supports raise**

Paul Sonn is the state policy program director at the National Employment Law Project. It's a research and advocacy organization that focuses on workforce policy. They work on policies surrounding minimum wage, unemployment insurance, policy affecting gig workers, workplace health and safety, etc.

Sonn supports the raise.

“The Hochul labor department’s one-dollar raise in the upstate minimum wage will make sure the pay for workers like home health aides and retail workers keeps up with the keeps up with the huge increases that they’re seeing in the cost of food, gas and housing,” Sonn says. “Hundreds of thousands of workers upstate will benefit. But all it’s doing is helping those workers tread water by kind of preserving their purchasing power. It doesn’t deliver them a raise in real terms.”

Sonn says the problem is that upstate minimum wage was set lower than other states as part of a deal in 2016 when the state last raised it.

“As a result, the upstate wage is not that high,” Sonn says. “And in the rest of the state it’s stalled at \$15 an hour and hasn’t increased in several years. Our minimum wage has fallen far behind many other cities and states. So New Yorkers really need Governor Hochul and the legislature to raise the minimum wage statewide which would translate to raising it to over \$21 an hour by 2027.”

Critics say this could lower job opportunities

Those who are opposed to the minimum wage increase say it will hurt small businesses trying to stay afloat. They also feel that it could reduce job opportunities.

Ryan Bourne of the Cato Institute says there's a case to be made against raising the minimum wage. "If you raise the wage rate that companies have to pay by government diktat, businesses will tend to only hire people whose productivity can command that rate, reducing job opportunities or hours available to young, inexperienced, or poorly educated workers," he wrote in a piece on the topic.

State Division of Budget recommends the increase

The order Reardon issued is subject to public comment, following a required economic analysis conducted by the New York State Division of the Budget (DOB).

"By raising the minimum wage incrementally, New York State is helping businesses adjust to the new rate, while giving low-wage workers the ability to better participate in our economy," New York State Department of Labor Commissioner Roberta Reardon says. "Continuing with the multi-year plan to raise the minimum wage is in line with market standards and ensures that no worker is left behind."

Officials say an average of 200,000 New Yorkers in upstate counties will benefit from this wage increase. Of those, 44% of which are full-time workers and nearly 25% are supporting children, according to the release.