

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 15

Submitted to the Senate Labor Committee by

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On behalf of the Catholic Bishops of New Jersey, I ask the Senate Labor Committee to release Senate Bill 15 favorably. S15 would incrementally increase New Jersey's minimum wage from \$8.38 per hour to \$15.00 per hour over four years while maintaining an annual increase based on the Cost of Living Index.

Catholic Social Teaching supports workers' rights for a just wage. Under Catholic Social Teaching, a just wage is the instrument that permits workers to gain access to the goods of the earth.

A just wage is more than a means to obtain basic needs. A just wage recognizes that every employee, including those in "low wage" positions, contributes to society with unique sets of talents, skills, and experiences.

Simply stated, a just wage affirms the intrinsic Human dignity of workers.

Today, far too many individuals, especially those with families, are working 40, 50, even 60 hours per week, yet are unable to obtain adequate shelter, food, and healthcare – they are the "working poor." We support S15, in part, because when full time workers cannot meet basic needs, society has a moral obligation to respond.

We realize that increasing the minimum wage will not eliminate poverty. However, Senate Bill 15 would be an important step towards helping the working poor and providing the opportunity for them to enjoy a greater sense of self-worth and dignity.

Thank you.