



# FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

*The nonpartisan public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Florida*

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## **Amendment 2: Considerations as you vote**

September 28, 2020

*...in every case, a just wage is the concrete means of verifying the justice of the whole socioeconomic system and, in any case, of checking that it is functioning justly. (Laborem Exercens, no. 19)*

### ***The Amendment***

Floridians have the opportunity to vote this November on an amendment to the state Constitution that would increase the minimum wage to \$10.00 per hour effective September 30, 2021. Each September 30 thereafter, the minimum wage would increase by \$1.00 per hour until it reaches \$15.00 per hour in 2026. From that point forward, the minimum wage shall be adjusted annually for inflation.

### ***The Church on Wages: A moral economy ensures a just wage and is centered on people***

Human work has inherent dignity, and just wages honor that dignity. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, “a just wage is the legitimate fruit of work. . . . [It] should guarantee man the opportunity to provide a dignified livelihood for himself and his family on the material, social, cultural, and spiritual level” (no. 2434). Just wages allow us to develop more fully as individuals, families, neighborhoods, communities, parishes, and even society as a whole.

### ***Florida: Current state minimum wage is too low; working poor struggle to survive***

The current minimum wage in Florida, though higher than federal law requires, falls short of this standard of a just wage for its failure to provide sufficient resources for individuals to form and support families. A full-time worker paid the minimum wage does not earn enough money to raise a child free from poverty. This is unacceptable.

In 2018, 13% of Florida households lived below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) even with record low unemployment. Another 33% earned above the FPL, but did not earn enough to afford basic household necessities.<sup>1</sup> These families are particularly vulnerable to hardship from a small increase in regular bills, illness, or economic disruption. This population has disproportionately endured the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has exposed the economic fragility that is widespread in Florida.

### ***Conclusion***

The Church is not led by economists or labor market experts, but by pastors who every day see the pain and struggles of families who find it increasingly difficult to afford basic needs in an economy that does not produce enough jobs with just wages. Church leaders are also employers; the challenges of providing a just wage are significant and familiar. Without proposing the ideal amount of the minimum wage, the current minimum wage fails to provide sufficient resources for individuals to form and support families.

There may be legitimate concerns that prompt both opposition and support to the amendment. Some propose that raising the minimum wage may inadvertently increase unemployment, reduce hours, or increase the cost of goods, especially in the short-term. Still others offer that increasing the purchasing power of low-paid workers creates new jobs and stimulates various sectors of the economy.

What is clear is that Florida’s lowest paid workers need assistance and they must become full participants in economic life in Florida, whether Amendment 2 passes or not. Increasing wages in the manner proposed in this amendment is one way to meet that need.

<sup>1</sup> United Way of Florida. 2020. ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) in Florida: A Financial Hardship Study. [https://www.uwof.org/sites/uwof.org/files/2020ALICEHighlightsReport\\_FL\\_FINAL-4.15.20.pdf](https://www.uwof.org/sites/uwof.org/files/2020ALICEHighlightsReport_FL_FINAL-4.15.20.pdf). Retrieved 9/15/20