

Building a strong economy with good paying jobs in West Virginia will take putting more money in the pockets of working families so they can spend it locally, grow our businesses and invest it in their family's health, wellbeing and future. For far too long, state policymakers have taken a top-down approach that prioritizes the profits of mostly large out-of-state corporations at the expense of the people who do the work each day that makes our economy run. Since 2006, West Virginia has drastically cut corporate taxes while it has gone down a path of budget austerity that has resulted in less investment in our public schools and more debt on the backs of our college students.

The strength and prosperity of working families should be a priority in West Virginia. As the state's economy changes, it's imperative that all working people, regardless of income, can enjoy the dignity and quality of life that comes with the ability to balance work and family. Policy choices can improve a working parent's ability to support their family, improving the health and livelihood of their children and better the outcomes for generations to come. Putting additional money in the pockets of low- and moderate-income families will allow them to spend more money in our local communities, stimulating the economy and spurring greater business activity and job growth. Here are seven policies that do just that:

- * **Raising the minimum wage** to \$15 an hour by 2025 and doing away with the two-tiered system of the tipped minimum wage would lift pay for over a third of West Virginia's workers. This would allow working people to better support their families and would stimulate local economies while improving long-term outcomes.

- * Establishing a refundable state **Earned Income Tax Credit** (EITC) would lift low-income families out of poverty while boosting long-term earnings and workforce participation as well as improving health and educational outcomes.

- * Raising the salary threshold below which workers are eligible for **overtime pay** would benefit 66,000 workers in West Virginia. This rule change would put more money in the pockets of working people, either through overtime pay or increased salaries to meet the new threshold.

- * Receiving a work schedule with little advance notice, fluctuating shift times and working an inconsistent number of hours from week-to-week can harm working people's ability to meet responsibilities on and off the job. By setting **fair workweek standards**, over 430,000 working West Virginians will be better able to care for and support our families and build thriving communities.

- * Expanding access to **affordable quality child care** would boost labor force participation, improve long-term child outcomes, help more businesses thrive and improve quality of life for working families. For far too many parents, the high cost of child care is a huge financial barrier to joining the workforce—especially those families between 200 and 400 percent of the federal poverty line.

- * Having access to **earned paid sick days** is crucial to reducing the spread of illness, keeping communities healthy, avoiding productivity loss, reducing workplace turnover and supporting parents and caregivers so they can balance work and family. Altogether, nearly half (46 percent) of private sector workers in West Virginia lack this basic protection.

- * As working parents split more of the child care and breadwinning responsibilities, workers in West Virginia should have the ability to take **paid leave** to address personal and caregiving needs. Access to

paid family and medical leave improves outcomes for children and benefits businesses by creating healthier and more productive employees.

These policies have the long-term benefits of growing our economy by investing in the people who make it run. Respected workers are productive workers, so these policies are not only good for working people, they are good for business. Working families have always been the backbone of West Virginia's economy, and by using these opportunities to help them increase their earning potential as well as meet responsibilities outside of work, we invest in a stronger, more prosperous state. The modern realities of work mean that more working parents will be in service sector, low-wage work for longer periods of time. It's up to policymakers to ensure that these working people have access to the policies outlined in this report: those that will make West Virginia's economy work for them.