



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

April 8, 2014

Dear Senator:

Consideration of legislation in the United States Senate that would raise the federal minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour is expected soon. On behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and millions of Americans working in poverty, I am writing to urge you to support bringing this vital legislation to the floor and passing it immediately as part of an overall strategy to reduce poverty in the United States.

As the presiding bishop of the largest Lutheran denomination in the United States, I share the convictions stated in our *Social Statement: The Church in Society*, which in part states,

“God works through the family, education, the economy, the state, and other structures necessary for life in the present age. God institutes governing authorities, for example, to serve the good of society. This church respects the God-given integrity and tasks of governing authorities and other worldly structures, while holding them accountable to God.”

In this context, Lutherans have studied and walked with those living and working in poverty. We recognize that the causes of poverty are complex and that a comprehensive solution will include more than a single initiative.

In addition to the economic benefits it will bring to the entire economy, increasing the federal minimum wage affirms both the value of work and the value to society of those who engage in it. Increasing the federal minimum wage will remove barriers that make it more difficult for many to pursue education, training, and/or to attend to the needs of their families—the vast majority of whom are women and persons of color. More desperately for some, an increase will contribute to improved physical health for themselves and their families.

As Lutherans, we believe all of us benefit when those who receive the least for their hard work are better rewarded for their labor and can more fully contribute to the life we share as a nation. As Lutherans, we are committed to a country reconciled to one another in shared service of the common good as our best hope for a more perfect union, for the establishment of Justice and the way to ensure the blessings of freedom for ourselves and the generations that follow us.

In the days that come, I urge both the House and Senate to pass legislation that will lift working families out of poverty and give all workers seeking the opportunity to take advantage of upward mobility and the economic blessings we enjoy as a nation. Increasing the federal minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour is an important step in ensuring meaningful progress in reducing poverty in our richly blessed nation. I urge you to support increasing the federal minimum wage today.

God's peace,

Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop