

Facilitated Minimum Wage Input Session
August 4, 2018
Metro State University

Small Group Discussion Notes

Facilitator: Mary Whitney Note Taker: Julie Shannon

Themes:

1. Tax cuts for businesses make \$15 minimum wage very viable
2. Enforcement plans for St Paul are super important
3. Importance of valuing the work of servers and service workers, understanding their value and the challenges and insecurity their work entails
4. Input by low wage workers needs to be central to the planning, more effort is needed to engage this group
5. Other major expenses like housing and healthcare are part of the picture and need to be addressed to impact poverty

Question One: Where do you live? Why are you here?

- Westside
- Work in St Paul, live elsewhere (5)

- Head of Eastside Business Association, on study group
- Have worked in the Hospitality Industry 35 years – here to speak for servers
- Newly employed at McDonalds as a teen
- Organizer for workers issues (CTUL) – have worked as a server, understand how hard it is to make it financially

What opportunities or challenges can you see in raising the minimum wage?

Opportunities

- It can only be positive with a better wage
- The money will go back into the community
- Businesses can afford to do this because they just got tax breaks
- Catch up/ keep up- cost of living has increased, but not wages
- As a teenager, can pay for field trips, take care of needs, help support family – it is right for teens to get the same wage for the same work
- Higher wages means more family time
- Chance to do right by the citizens
- Fewer people in poverty
- Highlights other issues that keep people in poverty – housing is crazy expensive- must be addressed

Discussion about issue as it relates to Servers and why there should not be a 'tip penalty':

- Servers are subject to poorly run businesses at times that affect how many customers there are, therefore how many tips there are
- The restaurant business is less accountable in general/corrupt; leaves workers vulnerable
- Servers have to tip- out busser, bartender, kitchen – who get higher wages and Cost of Living increases, tips are not what they seem

Challenges

- Challenge - how things are messaged that creates fear in businesses
- Businesses, especially small businesses don't see how they can do it

Question 3: Having heard about the Citizens League process and the opportunities and challenges presented by your neighbors, how can we move forward with the raising the minimum wage in the City of St Paul.

- Emphasize how tax cut can support businesses to pay workers
- Work harder to connect with affected minimum wage workers who may not be able to attend meetings due to hours/ wages. Get info out with outreach
- Enforcement Standards
 - Make sure there is money in the plan for enforcement
 - Regular monitoring
 - Make stipulation that businesses are held accountable and workers are not harmed if business terminates (ie Rudolph's, Burger King in Mpls)
- City should look at ways to pool dollars from bigger businesses to support smaller businesses
- Universal healthcare will shift some of the expenses from businesses