



For Immediate Release

**September 16, 2015**

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## **Avakian: Minimum wage will not increase in 2016**

*It's time to raise wages and strengthen economy, says Avakian*

**PORTLAND**—Despite rising housing, child care and other household costs, Oregon's minimum wage will remain \$9.25 in 2016, Commissioner Brad Avakian announced today.

Each year, Commissioner Avakian calculates the minimum wage by measuring the increase to the Consumer Price Index (CPI), a federal figure published by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics to track prices for a fixed "market basket" of goods. The figure helps track inflation across the country, but does not fully capture local cost increases, such as skyrocketing rents in the Portland or Eugene metro areas.

About 100,000 workers – six percent of the state's workforce – currently earn the minimum wage. For full-time workers, Oregon's wage floor translates to less than \$20,000 a year.

"It's time to take action on wages," said Labor Commissioner Avakian. "The reality is that Oregon's wage floor is not keeping pace with the rising cost of rent, child care and other expenses. We should raise our state's minimum wage so that people working full-time can afford to provide for their families."

A common misconception about employees earning a minimum wage is that they are mostly teenagers. However, according to the Economic Policy Institute, roughly 80-percent of all minimum wage workers living in states with an indexed minimum wage are at least 20 years old. Women are also disproportionately affected: According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 62 percent of all minimum wage earners nationwide are women.

"A strong wage floor is an important foundation for family economic security," said Avakian. "By passing a higher minimum wage, Oregon can help families struggling to make ends meet while boosting the purchasing power of hundreds of thousands of Oregonians around the state."

As Labor Commissioner, Avakian both sets the state's minimum wage and oversees its enforcement.

In 2013, Commissioner Avakian testified before the U.S. Senate's Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee in support of Sen. Tom Harken's efforts to boost the federal minimum wage. In 2014, Avakian was the first statewide official to call for a minimum wage increase.

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