LIVING WAGES
More than just the right thing to do

Sarah Wilhelm PhD
Sarah.a.wilhelm@gmail.com
Thrivelaplata.org
La Plata County Thrive!

- Our Mission is to enhance the quality of life in La Plata County through fair and just wages for all.

- We envision La Plata County as a place where all workers earn a living wage, enabling individuals, families and the community to thrive.
Celebrate Local Living Wage Employers

• Over 90 employers certified – covering 4,500+ workers

• Coffee Shops
• Hospitals
• School districts
• Restaurants
• Churches
• Nonprofits
• Business Services
FIGHT FOR $15 AND A UNION
Divergence Between Hourly Compensation and Net Productivity Growth
Real and Nominal Minimum Wage

- **Real federal minimum wage (2016$)**
- **At the pace of productivity growth**
- **Nominal minimum wage**
Who Would Benefit from $15 In CO

- 23% of children with at least one parent affected
- 39% of single parents
La Plata County

- Workforce below $13.25/hour
  - 11,615 workers
  - 31% of workforce

Self Sufficiency wage for an adult and one preschooler HH
- $23.21
What Can You Do?

• Become a Thrive! Certified Living Wage Employer
• Or Donate to Thrive!
• Support legislation to allow local minimum wage laws

• Why Not??
Living Wages Benefit Workers

• Able to adequately provide for self and family
  • Avoid stress
  • Avoid holding down multiple jobs to make ends meet
  • Avoid crippling debt
• Job cuts overblown
Living Wages Grow the Economy

• Consumer demand is the fuel that drives the economy
  • multiplier
• Inequality leads to a lack of consumer demand
• Broaden the tax base ➔ infrastructure investment

Paying a living wage creates an economy that works for everyone.
Living Wages Benefit Your Community

- Parents can spend more time with their families
- Reduce child neglect cases
- Keep ex-convicts from returning to prison

Because Inequality Hurts Everyone
Living Wages Benefit Employers

• Increase worker morale
• Increase worker health
• Improve quality of service.
• Reduce turnover
  • Lower turnover increased on the job safety
• Increase demand for your products/services
As an organization we understand the cost of living in a place like Durango. Providing a livable wage helps us retain valuable employees while supporting our community.

Durango is a special community, and it is important to us that our employees are able to live and thrive here.
5 Benefits to the Community of Higher Minimum Wages

- Higher wages keep ex-convicts from returning to prison: An average minimum wage increase of 50 cents reduced the probability that ex-convicts would return to prison within a year by 2.8%. [http://papers.nber.org/tmp/52698-w25116.pdf](http://papers.nber.org/tmp/52698-w25116.pdf)
- Reducing employee turnover rate: the study shows the annual retention rate rose from 39 percent to 74 percent following significant wage and benefit increases and that a $1 increase in the wage rate from $8 an hour would increase retention by 17 percentage points. [http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/homecare/pdf/howes_01.pdf](http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/homecare/pdf/howes_01.pdf)
- Reducing child neglect cases: Increasing the federal minimum wage by $1 would result in 9.6% or 9,700 fewer cases of child neglect, an August 2017 study concluded. [https://phys.org/news/2017-08-minimum-wage-child-neglect-cases.html#jCp](https://phys.org/news/2017-08-minimum-wage-child-neglect-cases.html#jCp)
Citations

- https://www.epi.org/productivity-pay-gap/
THANK YOU!!

thrivelaplata.org
thrivelaplata@gmail.com