

Minimum Wage and Public Health

Health Equity Council

Executive statement

Increase in minimum wage can result in positive individual and population health outcomes, and reduction in economic inequities.

Background

Financial wellbeing is a critical social determinant of health, shaping individual and population health. Poverty can limit access to primary needs and medical services, resulting in adverse health outcomes. People living in poverty face significant barriers to housing, transportation, education, job opportunities, as well as barriers to other safe and healthy environments and resources that are key to health and wellbeing. This results in chronic illnesses, disability and lower life expectancy.

Raising the minimum wage increases the earnings of low-wage workers. Living wage can allow access to primary needs, such as safe housing, nutritious food, childcare, healthcare, transportation, educational and employment attainment. Increase in minimum wage has been shown to result in decreased low-birthweight births, decreased post neonatal mortality, and decreased smoking rates. A higher wage also results in psychological well-being, improved self-reported well-being, job satisfaction and productivity.

Policymaking should consider the overall positive health outcomes of raising minimum wage. Minimum wage increase is most successful when it's part of structural changes in income and purchasing power. In accordance with the city of Albuquerque's commitment to attaining economic equity, raising wages and comprehensive integrative public health approaches to reducing income disparities must be considered.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Raise Minimum Wage

Increase minimum wage so that a four-person household with a single minimum-wage earner can live above the federal poverty level

Recommendation 2: Index it to Inflation and Cost of Living

Annually increase minimum wage indexed to inflation and cost of living in the city

Recommendation 3: Ensuring Economic Equity

Ensure that all are included in minimum wage standards and wage protections, especially women of color and other historically underserved populations

Recommendation 4: Protecting Workers

Enact policies and fund community programs for worker rights, wage protection, job training and opportunities for economically vulnerable populations, and other comprehensive labor environments

Recommendation 5: Prevent Increase in Costs

Enact structural policies that prevent increase in the cost of food, housing and other basic goods and services to ensure availability and attainability for minimum wage earners