

\$15 minimum wage makes good business sense

There's a big item left on the agenda of our state representatives - raising the minimum wage. As a small business owner, I'm all for it.

My wife, Amanda, and I founded RISE Fitness and Adventure in 2013. We had a modest initial facility but a big vision to foster fitness and community. Now, we're the largest fitness facility in the area, with a beautiful, state-of-the-art 24,000-square-foot space that reflects not just our vision but the dedication of our employees.

We rely on staff who are supportive and friendly, enjoy their work, and take excellent care of our customers. We want people to walk through our door and feel welcome. And we want our employees to feel pride in building not just a better business, but a healthier community.

We have always paid above the minimum wage because we know that fair pay matters a lot in the success of our business and the lives of our employees. I grew up with a single mother who worked hard at multiple jobs and still struggled to make ends meet.

We don't want our employees to have that same struggle. We don't want anyone's employees to have that same struggle.

Delaware's current minimum wage is \$9.25 an hour. We start employees well above that from day one. We pay new employees at least \$12 to \$13 for an initial training period to see if we are a good fit for each other. We then quickly pay employees \$15 an hour or higher, plus good benefits like health insurance and a 401(k).

We actually decided to raise wages to \$15 ahead of schedule after I signed the Delaware Business for a Fair Minimum Wage statement supporting the legislation to raise Delaware's minimum wage to \$15 by 2025. We show from our own example how paying a \$15 minimum wage makes good sense for small businesses. The legislation already passed by the Delaware Senate doesn't ask any business to jump to \$15 quickly. It phases in minimum wage



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increases gradually from \$9.25 to \$10.50 in January 2022, \$11.75 in 2023, \$13.25 in 2024 and \$15 in 2025.

The Delaware House of Representatives should not further delay this already gradual raise.

Businesses that pay minimum wage now will have time to plan ahead and adjust their wages. They'll be able to experience the benefits of higher pay like decreased employee turnover and increased consumer spending.

We know that by paying wages our employees can live on, we keep our turnover low, and don't waste time and money regularly churning through workers rather than training them for the long term.

People want to stay and grow with our business. Our staff have more pride in their work, provide better service and are more invested in our company.

Our low employee turnover fosters better relationships with customers. Our dedicated staff help us create the kind of community that keeps customers coming back and talking us up to other people.

Raising the minimum wage will strengthen Delaware's workforce and our businesses. Delaware's minimum wage wasn't adequate before the pandemic. And it's even more inadequate now.

As we recover from the pandemic, a decent minimum wage has never been more important. People need jobs that pay enough to live on. Businesses need customers who can afford what we're offering.

At RISE, we reinvest our profits back into strengthening and growing our business. Raising the state minimum wage is an investment in our economy and our communities. Raising the minimum wage will help Delaware recover from the pandemic and build a stronger economy for all.

Ryan Peters

RISE co-owner and company director

