

## Minimum wage hike good for business

By **Darius Ross**

When Gov Andrew Cuomo called for raising New York's minimum wage, he expressed not only his own view, but also the convictions of 80 percent of New Yorkers who agree that the state's lowest-paid workers are in urgent need of a raise. As a business owner, I support the effort to raise the minimum wage because it makes good business sense.

Raising New York's minimum wage is a critical priority for accelerating the state's economic recovery. When low-paid workers struggle to buy necessities on inadequate wages as the cost of living rises, it undermines our economy. As said in a Business for a Fair Minimum Wage statement, "With far less buying power than it had four decades ago, today's minimum wage means poverty for

working families and weakens the consumer demand at the heart of our economy."

Raising the minimum wage will put more money in the pockets of workers who most need to spend those dollars. It will boost consumer spending at local businesses across the state. And nothing drives business owners like me to hire additional workers more than increased consumer demand.

Higher wages also benefit businesses by boosting employee productivity, retention and customer satisfaction, and reducing the high costs of employee turnover. Moreover, increasing the minimum wage will reduce the strain on our social safety net caused by inadequate wages.

Cuomo proposes raising the state's minimum wage from its current rate of \$7.25 per hour, which is just \$15,080 a year for full-time work, to \$8.75 per hour. This minimum wage increase would benefit nearly 1.6 million low-paid workers across the state, according to the nonpartisan Economic Policy Institute. The increased wages would generate more than \$840 million in new economic activity.

Minimum-wage workers in retail, restaurants, hospitality, the service industries and

other support staff are long overdue for a raise that reflects current living standards. Rent, food, transportation and other keys of life can't wait.

New York lags 19 states — including neighboring Connecticut, Massachusetts and Vermont — that have raised their minimum wages above \$7.25. It's time to act. The minimum wage should be increased to \$8.75, and then indexed to inflation so its value does not shrink as the cost of living rises.

As a business owner who was once a low-income wage earner myself, I support raising the minimum wage to give all New Yorkers a jump-start to living a more hopeful, productive, prosperous life.

Raising the minimum wage will be good for New York's workers, businesses, and economy. Legislative leaders such as Speaker Sheldon Silver and Sen. Jeffrey Klein have named it a top priority for 2013. The time for a minimum wage mandate is now. Let's get it done.

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