

# Raising the minimum wage is good business for Delaware | Opinion

**Courtney Sunborn** Special to the USA TODAY Network

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As a longtime business owner, I applaud the Delaware Senate for voting to raise the state minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2025. For the good of our economy, I hope the House follows suit.

I know from experience that paying livable wages is good business.

Ecologic Cleaning has been in business for 19 years. From our founding, we made the decision to pay wages high enough that our employees could live on. We value our staff, and that starts with fair pay.

We pay new employees well above Delaware's current \$9.25 minimum wage, which is not a decent wage floor. None of our employees makes less than \$14.50 an hour after their first month of work, and everyone will be at no less than \$15 later this year.

Our cleaning business shows what's doable and profitable in 2021. It's certainly reasonable to raise the state minimum wage and expect businesses to gradually increase to \$15 by 2025.

I started the company as a cleaner, and I know what difficult, physically intense work it is. By paying living wages, we keep our staff turnover very low and our morale and productivity high. It saves us a lot of time and money to retain employees who are already trained to deliver the great service that keeps our clients happy.

Our clients appreciate that we pay living wages. They also value the reliability and sense of security that comes from seeing the same people in their homes and their businesses from one cleaning to the next. And that foundation of experience and trust has proved vital during the pandemic. Our clients know they can count on us to carefully follow rigorous health and safety protocols.

Many low-wage businesses have high turnover. They don't take into account the time and money they can save with livable wages and lower turnover. Businesses that haven't made the switch don't realize all the benefits — from reduced recruitment and training costs to increased employee productivity and client satisfaction.

Our satisfied clients don't keep it to themselves — they tell others about us. Those word-of-mouth referrals allow us to save precious resources on marketing costs. Employees who are happy with their pay are happier on the job. Clients recognize and value hardworking, dedicated workers and, in turn, want to see the business paying fair wages succeed.

Raising Delaware's minimum wage to \$15 will bring people out of the impossible situation of working hard at a full-time job and still not making ends meet. And it will boost the local consumer spending that local businesses depend on.

When people earn more as workers, they will spend more as customers. This creates a virtuous cycle that will drive Delaware's economy.

As Margot Dorfman, CEO of the U.S. Women's Chamber of Commerce, said in her testimony to the Senate Labor Committee, "While some try to portray a minimum wage increase as a fight between business and workers, raising the minimum wage is in reality good for both."



Lawmakers are not proposing to increase the minimum wage to \$15 overnight. It would gradually increase from \$9.25 now to \$10.50 per hour in 2022, \$11.75 in 2023, \$13.25 in 2024 and \$15 in 2025. Businesses that pay low wages now have time to plan and make the steady changes that improve the lives of their employees and make their business stronger for the long term.

Raising Delaware's minimum wage will help workers, businesses and communities. It will strengthen Delaware's economy for everyone.

It's time for the General Assembly to get the job done and raise the minimum wage.

*Courtney Sunborn is the founder and owner of Ecolistic Cleaning based in Lewes, Delaware. She is a member of Business for a Fair Minimum Wage.*