

THE FIGHT FOR \$15 CAMPAIGN AND THE JUSTICE & PEACE COMMITTEE



JUSTICE & PEACE
COMMITTEE

In Baltimore, wages for people working in the service sector have been steadily decreasing for several years, leaving thousands of workers with low incomes, few, if any benefits, and no job

security. Many of our sisters and brothers in Baltimore face a grave struggle to provide for themselves and their families, pay their bills, and keep a roof over their heads.

In the past, the dominant industry in Baltimore was steel and workers, represented by the United Steelworkers, were paid wages that supported middle-class families with health insurance, pensions, and job security. Now, health care is the prominent industry in our city, and while Baltimore is home to some of the most prestigious institutions in the country, wages for many workers are low.

The Fight Begins

In 2012, the Fight for \$15 was ignited when a group of courageous fast food workers in New York City staged a series of strikes demanding to be paid a \$15 minimum wage with the right to a union. Many lost their jobs, but a movement was launched, and a national network was created. Today, [The Fight for \\$15](#) is a global movement in over 300 cities on six continents. The movement represents and advocates for underpaid workers everywhere: fast-food workers, home health aides, child care providers, airport workers, adjunct professors, retail employees, etc.

Following success in New York, the movement traveled to San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, D.C. In city halls, county councils, state legislatures, and at the ballot box, more and more jurisdictions in the United States passed the Fight For \$15 bill.



[A study by University of California, Berkley](#) on San Francisco, the first city to implement a citywide minimum wage in the U.S., showed that an estimated 140,000 workers would benefit from a higher minimum wage. The study also showed that businesses could easily adjust to the modest increase in operating costs through reduced employee turnovers and improved work performance. [In a similar study](#), researchers found that raising the wage in Seattle succeeded in raising incomes for low-paid workers without impacting the number of jobs. These findings are in line with the bulk of research on the effects of raising minimum wages. The Fight Moves to Maryland

The Fight Moves to Maryland

In November of 2017, Montgomery County, the largest and one of the most affluent jurisdictions in Maryland, was the first in [the state to require a \\$15 minimum wage](#), and the second jurisdiction in the D.C. region, [after Washington](#). The FF\$15 bill was passed by the Montgomery county council in January 2017, vetoed by the County Executive, and then passed unanimously with his support in November. The veto had an adverse effect on Baltimore's legislation when, in March 2017, Mayor Pugh initially vetoed the FF\$15 bill despite her pledged support.

After the Fight For \$15 was officially introduced into Maryland legislation in the 2018 legislative session, it never received a vote. Support for the FF\$15 campaign was confirmed by voters who elected candidates that supported the bill. However, one notable exception was Larry Hogan, who was easily re-elected as Governor. The opposing sides on this issue were headed for a confrontation in Annapolis in January of 2019 when the General Assembly convened.

The Justice & Peace Committee is Called to Action

In living out its commitment to a faith that does justice, [The Justice and Peace Committee](#) of Saint Ignatius, particularly the [Economic Justice](#) Subcommittee, has been an active Fight For \$15 coalition member since 2017. Over the past two years, members have actively contacted city council members and state representatives to support FF\$15 legislation. In 2018 and 2019, members officially supported the statewide legislation, wrote letters and emails, and travelled to Annapolis to meet face to face with legislators to tell them why FF\$15 is so important to the Saint Ignatius Community. The subcommittee rallied with sisters and brothers from across the state, including those from other Baltimore parishes.



Terry Cavanagh, J&P Economic Justice Subcommittee Chair, said, "How can we claim there is equal opportunity when so many children in our community grow up in homes where working mothers and fathers [don't make enough to provide basic needs?](#)" He went on to speak about the involvement of the Justice & Peace Economic Justice Subcommittee, saying, "We are thankful to be a small part of a large coalition, but we made a difference."

The Campaign arrives in Annapolis

In January of 2019, The Fight for \$15 bill officially arrived in Maryland legislation. Across several counties in

Maryland, candidates for county executive stated publicly that they supported FF\$15 and if state-wide legislation didn't pass, they would push for it in their own counties. Before the legislative session began, House and Senate Leadership included Fight For \$15 in their list of priority bills and publicly committed to pass our bill.

The Fight for \$15 bill passed through committees and was adopted by the House and Senate before being sent to Governor Hogan's desk. Unsurprisingly, he vetoed the bill. However, since it passed by such large majorities in both chambers, his veto was quickly overridden and on March 28th, 2019, the FF\$15 bill passed in Maryland, making it the 6th state in the country to do so. Over the next six years we will see a gradual increase to \$15 per hour:

How and When \$10.10 will become \$15.00

DATE	Employers of 14 or more	Employers of less than 14
1/1/2020	11.00	11.00
1/1/2021	11.75	11.60
1/1/2022	12.50	12.20
1/1/2023	13.25	12.80
1/1/2024	14.00	13.40
1/1/2025	15.00	14.00
1/1/2026		14.60
7/1/2026		15.00

The Justice & Peace Economic Justice Subcommittee would like to extend thanks to many for their leadership, their persistence, and their courage and willingness to take on an issue that is not without controversy, often between well-meaning people. Thanks to Bill McCarthy and others at Catholic Charities that will struggle to raise more money but understand the importance of paying wages that people can live on. Thanks to the local businesses who took public positions in favor of FF\$15, especially [Ned Atwater](#) of Atwater's Traditional Foods.

As an arm of the Justice & Peace Committee of Saint Ignatius Catholic Community, the Economic Justice Subcommittee is dedicated to the service of faith and the promotion of justice and will continue to fight and advocate for our city. To learn more about J&P, Economic Justice, and the Fight for \$15, please visit [our website](#).