



# POVERTY WAGES AND HEALTHCARE

**Everyone deserves a high standard of healthcare regardless of their income.**

**A livable wage is defined** by the International Labor Organization as: Wages and benefits paid for a standard working week should meet at least legal or industry minimum wage standards and always be sufficient to meet basic needs of workers and their families.

**Healthcare benefits must be considered as a basic need** for all workers and their families. Most industrialized nations offer healthcare to their entire populations as a basic right. Since most medical benefits in the U.S. are tied to employer-based insurance, healthcare benefits must be seen as directly connected to a livable wage.

**Lack of good healthcare** from infancy is detrimental to a person in numerous ways. He or she tends to be less likely to go to college and less likely to get a good job, both of which perpetuate a cycle of low income workers who can't escape poverty. These workers or their families are more likely to be debilitated or die from an illness or disease that could have been treated with proper medical care in the first place.

**If a person or family qualifies for Medi-Cal**, they will find few doctors willing to take Medi-Cal patients because the program's payment rates are so low. Under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), if a person or family qualifies for subsidies, they can buy insurance, but may well have reduced access to care. High co-pays and deductibles discourage people with low incomes from using insurance and seeking timely treatment. When ill, they may still be reliant on hospital emergency rooms and under-funded neighborhood clinics.

**Low income workers** also face a shortage of medical services in our poorer communities. Good healthcare requires consistent access to providers as well as preventive care. Taking time off work and losing that pay is yet another obstacle.

**Undocumented immigrants** face even more extreme hardships to healthcare. They are barred from Medi-Cal and, except under very limited circumstances, are also barred from the ACA's Covered California. They may have no option but to wait until they are very ill before seeking care.

**Workers earning poverty wages** live week to week, often day to day. We support the movement to raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour because it is an improvement over the current minimum wage, but even \$15/hr. is not enough to accommodate rising health insurance costs and therefore cannot be considered as livable. The movement for a living wage also must include decent reliable healthcare for a better quality of life.

**Because everyone deserves an equally high standard of healthcare – regardless of income – we believe in an improved and expanded Medicare for all.**