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POLICY BRIEF: A Higher Minimum Wage Would Reduce Child Poverty in Pennsylvania

HARRISBURG — The Keystone Research Center issued a briefing paper today highlighting how policymakers can reduce child poverty in Pennsylvania by raising the minimum wage. Pennsylvania's child poverty rate is 19%, ranking it 28th in the nation. That means that over half a million kids in the Commonwealth suffer deprivation of their basic needs – and that is a conservative estimate.

The report brings together the facts on how poverty experienced in childhood can damage brain development and lead to mental and physical health problems, among other things. These issues are not short lived – people who experience poverty as children are more likely to have lower educational attainment, have health problems as adults, and be poor as adults.

The harmful consequences of child poverty affect all of us. Researchers have found that eliminating poverty in the first five years of life would increase lifetime earnings up to \$100,000 per child. Increased earnings mean increased income tax revenue for the state. Reducing child poverty would also save taxpayers money on healthcare, safety net programs, and the justice system. In addition, it would reduce crime and increase economic productivity with a healthier workforce.

As candidates for public office at all levels of government speak to voters' door to door, at public forums and through editorial board visits ahead of the mid-term election, they can draw on the research and evidence synthesized in this report as another important reason to support raising the minimum wage.

The Keystone Research Center recently released factsheets for each Pennsylvania County, state Senate and House district as well as for each Congressional District on the number of workers affected by state and federal proposals to raise the minimum wage. This latest report shines a light on a vulnerable population not always talked about in conversations about the minimum wage – the children who depend on those workers. When hardworking parents cannot meet their families' basic needs, all Pennsylvanians bear the consequences.

“We have the means to reduce child poverty; raising the wage is a key first step, **said Anne DeCecco, Policy Analyst for the Keystone Research Center and author of the policy brief.** “We all stand to benefit when every child in the Commonwealth is given the opportunity to realize their full potential.”

[View the briefing paper:](#)

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