

MEMORANDUM FROM THE

ULSTER COUNTY OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER

March S. Gallagher, Esq.
Comptroller



Charles Dinstuhl, CPA
Deputy Comptroller

MEMORANDUM

To: Legislative Chair Peter Criswell

Cc: County Executive Jen Metzger
Ways and Means Chair John Gavaris

From: Comptroller March Gallagher

Re: Living Wage Act Review

Date: September 16, 2024

Ulster County Adopted Local Law No. 6 of 2021 Requiring the Payment of a Living Wage to Employees of Contractors and Subcontractors that Provide Services to the County.

Contracts with Ulster County contain reference to the Living Wage Act. Contractors must post information about the Living Wage Act in the workplace. Invoices and claims for payment must certify the payment of the living wage to all employees and vendors must maintain payroll records with titles and wage rates. Those records must be made available to the County upon request.

The local law set the living wage at \$15.00 per hour and called for the Ulster County Legislature to review annually and update the living wage by resolution as needed.

Since the local law was passed in 2021, Ulster County has not made changes to our living wage rate which remains at \$15 per hour. The nation has experienced significant inflation since 2021, and Ulster County has seen an increase in area median income and housing prices. As was [recently reported in local news](#), Ulster County's area median income has jumped 40% in just a few years.

According to [MIT's living wage calculator](#) Ulster County's living wage should be \$24.97. For a 40-hour work week, this would translate into an annual salary of \$51,938. The [Economic Policy Institute calculator](#) shows an even greater living wage of \$127,281 for a family of four in Ulster County which equates to approximately \$30.51.

Under New York State Law the minimum wage in Ulster County will go to \$15.50 per hour on January 1, 2025. Accordingly, beginning January 1, 2025, the County's living wage policy will be below minimum wage.

The Comptroller's Office is concerned that a Living Wage rate that is below minimum wage may confuse certain vendors and result in vendors relying on the County's Living Wage number rather than the minimum wage as required by state law.

Implementation and monitoring compliance with the Living Wage Act creates a burden both on vendors and on County staff seeking to check compliance with the Act. Some vendors found that compliance with the Living Wage Act caused compression in their salary structure that affected organizations' budgets.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, if we were to adopt the MIT recommended living wage by resolution, Ulster County itself would be in violation of the Act because we have a significant number of titles and grades currently earning below the MIT Living Wage for the County. All titles below a Grade 10A are earning less than \$24.97 for a seven-hour day and all titles below a grade 14 for an eight-hour day. These grades and titles will see changes in the current round of collective bargaining slated to take effect in 2025.

2.00% COLA Plus \$.25 on Steps 1-6 for the Year 2024
7 HOURS PER DAY

Grade	LENGTH OF CONTINUOUS SERVICE													Grade	
	Employees Hired After 1/1/94		All Nursing												
	Excluding All Nursing Titles		Titles*												
	All Employees After Length of Service Exceeds 24 Months														
Entry Level	Step 1	Entry Level	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Longevity 8	Longevity 12	Longevity 16	Longevity 20	Longevity 24	Longevity 28		
Less Than 12 Months	Greater Than 12 Months	Less Than 24 Months	Greater Than 24 Months	Less Than 36 Months	Greater Than 36 Months	Less Than 48 Months	Greater Than 48 Months	Less Than 60 Months	Greater Than 60 Months	Less Than 72 Months	Greater Than 72 Months	Less Than 84 Months	Greater Than 84 Months	Less Than 96 Months	Greater Than 96 Months
1	17.73	18.84	18.84	19.51	20.16	20.81	21.48	21.97	22.85	23.29	23.70	24.33	24.80	25.27	1
2	18.10	19.25	19.25	19.87	20.55	21.20	21.83	22.32	23.20	23.64	24.05	24.68	25.15	25.62	2
3	18.53	19.66	19.66	20.30	20.93	21.59	22.26	22.74	23.62	24.06	24.47	25.10	25.57	26.04	3
4	18.92	20.04	20.04	20.72	21.38	22.01	22.65	23.15	24.03	24.47	24.88	25.51	25.98	26.45	4
5	19.47	20.60	20.60	21.22	21.86	22.54	23.21	23.71	24.59	25.03	25.44	26.07	26.54	27.01	5
6	20.18	21.28	21.28	21.90	22.56	23.25	23.91	24.40	25.28	25.72	26.13	26.76	27.23	27.70	6
7	20.91	22.03	22.03	22.66	23.33	23.97	24.62	25.12	26.00	26.44	26.85	27.48	27.95	28.42	7
8	21.81	22.92	22.92	23.59	24.20	24.86	25.53	26.02	26.90	27.34	27.75	28.38	28.85	29.32	8
9	22.87	24.01	24.01	24.64	25.25	25.90	26.62	27.11	27.99	28.43	28.84	29.47	29.94	30.41	9
9A	23.18	24.30	24.30	24.94	25.56	26.21	26.92	27.41	28.29	28.73	29.14	29.77	30.24	30.71	9A
10	23.86	24.95	24.95	25.63	26.30	26.93	27.59	28.08	28.96	29.40	29.81	30.44	30.91	31.38	10
10A	24.16	25.26	25.26	25.92	26.61	27.24	27.89	28.39	29.27	29.71	30.12	30.75	31.22	31.69	10A
11	25.44	26.58	26.58	27.21	27.85	28.50	29.13	29.65	30.53	30.97	31.38	32.01	32.48	32.95	11
11A	25.75	26.88	26.88	27.51	28.16	28.81	29.44	29.96	30.84	31.28	31.69	32.32	32.79	33.26	11A
12	27.31	28.43	28.43	29.07	29.71	30.36	31.00	31.51	32.39	32.83	33.24	33.87	34.34	34.81	12
12A	27.62	28.74	28.74	29.38	30.01	30.67	31.31	31.82	32.70	33.14	33.55	34.18	34.65	35.12	12A
13	29.28	30.15	30.15	30.82	31.44	32.08	32.74	33.24	34.12	34.56	34.97	35.60	36.07	36.54	13
13A	29.59	30.46	30.46	31.12	31.75	32.39	33.05	33.55	34.43	34.87	35.28	35.91	36.38	36.85	13A
14	31.01	32.14	32.14	32.78	33.38	34.08	34.74	35.23	36.11	36.55	36.96	37.59	38.06	38.53	14
14A	31.32	32.44	32.44	33.09	33.70	34.37	35.04	35.53	36.41	36.85	37.26	37.89	38.36	38.83	14A
15	33.34	34.46	34.46	35.12	35.74	36.40	37.06	37.52	38.40	38.84	39.25	39.88	40.35	40.82	15
15A	33.66	34.77	34.77	35.42	36.03	36.72	37.38	37.84	38.72	39.16	39.57	40.20	40.67	41.14	15A
16	35.85	36.94	36.94	37.59	38.26	38.93	39.55	40.03	40.91	41.35	41.76	42.39	42.86	43.33	16
16A	36.16	37.26	37.26	37.91	38.55	39.23	39.87	40.35	41.23	41.67	42.08	42.71	43.18	43.65	16A
17	38.56	39.67	39.67	40.33	40.99	41.64	42.27	42.76	43.64	44.08	44.49	45.12	45.59	46.06	17
18	41.49	42.58	42.58	43.22	43.86	44.51	45.15	45.62	46.50	46.94	47.35	47.98	48.45	48.92	18
19	44.50	45.61	45.61	46.23	46.86	47.49	48.17	48.64	49.52	49.96	50.37	51.00	51.47	51.94	19
20	47.77	48.89	48.89	49.52	50.14	50.81	51.46	51.97	52.85	53.29	53.70	54.33	54.80	55.27	20
21	52.35	53.47	53.47	54.11	54.73	55.37	56.01	56.51	57.39	57.83	58.24	58.87	59.34	59.81	21
22	55.19	56.32	56.32	56.93	57.56	58.22	58.85	59.35	60.23	60.67	61.08	61.71	62.18	62.65	22
23	58.59	59.73	59.73	60.35	60.96	61.61	62.25	62.76	63.64	64.08	64.49	65.12	65.59	66.06	23
24	61.33	62.47	62.47	63.09	63.73	64.38	65.03	65.52	66.40	66.84	67.25	67.88	68.35	68.82	24
25	64.77	65.93	65.93	66.52	67.15	67.78	68.46	68.96	69.84	70.28	70.69	71.32	71.79	72.26	25

ROUNDED TO TWO DECIMAL PLACES

The Comptroller's Office recommends that the Ulster County Legislature conduct a prompt review of the Living Wage Act taking into consideration the issues raised here. Given changes to minimum wage, and current collective bargaining efforts, it may make sense to sunset the Act while reviewing other ways to address inequity and cost of living issues that will not create an undue burden on property taxpayers.