



Groups push Cuomo to raise minimum wage for social service contractors



By JIMMY VIELKIND 11:40 a.m. | Dec. 9, 2015

ALBANY — Workers at state-funded non-profits say they're an "extension" of the public workforce, and Gov. Andrew Cuomo should unilaterally raise the minimum wage for their workers to \$15 an hour.

Cuomo, a Democrat, is [pushing for legislation](#) that would raise the minimum hourly rate for all workers. But the measure faces a rocky future in the Legislature, and Cuomo already committed to gradual [increases for state employees](#) and has [praised municipalities](#) that have done the same.

"The governor has demonstrated his intention that all workers receive a living wage," Jennifer Jones Austin, executive director of the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, said during a Wednesday conference call with reporters. "Appreciating that human services workers under contract with the state are in fact an extension of the New York State government workforce, we're working to ensure they are not left behind in the governor's plan. ... Whether or not the Legislature acts or not, they need to be included."

Her group, along with the labor-backed Fiscal Policy Institute and the Human Services Council, estimated there are 200,000 people working at non-profit organizations around the state, and between 40,000 to 50,000 get the majority of their support from state funding. (The rest are funded by New York City as well as other counties and municipalities.) FPI deputy director James Parrott said the state contracts in this area now cost around \$1.5 billion; raising wages would cost between \$250 to \$300 million per year when fully implemented.

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Parrott said that half of those workers are currently paid less than \$15 an hour, and 31 percent less than \$10.50 an hour.

A Cuomo spokesman did not directly answer the groups' call; the governor [initially dismissed the idea](#) of unilaterally helping state employees, but then reversed himself.

"The administration looks forward to advancing legislation next year to raise the minimum wage for all workers, which will include state and non-state contractors who are

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currently working at the minimum wage," the spokesman, Rich Azzopardi, stated.

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