



Washington Association of Churches



Wider Opportunities for Women
Washington Living Wage Movement

For Immediate Release
Monday, September 13, 2001

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THE HIGH PRICE OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN WASHINGTON STATE

New Report Shows How Much It Costs Families in Washington to Make Ends Meet

To meet her family's most basic needs, a single adult in Bellevue with one preschooler and one school-age child must earn \$20.70 per hour. In Chelan County, she must earn \$12.54 per hour, and in Spokane County, she must earn \$14.23 per hour, according to a report released today at a news conference by the Washington Association of Churches, Washington Living Wage Movement, Welfare Rights Organizing Coalition, Washington Citizen Action, Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) and other groups working with these organizations. *The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Washington State*, which defines the income working families need to meet their basic needs without public or private assistance for each county in Washington, was written by Dr. Diana Pearce, a University of Washington sociologist, and Wider Opportunities for Women.

The report calculates Self-Sufficiency Wages for 70 family types in 39 counties in Washington. It finds that **families in Washington need at least twice the federal poverty level to meet basic needs like housing, child care, health care, food, transportation and taxes.** Families with incomes above the poverty level, but below the Self-Sufficiency Standard do not have enough to cover the costs of basic necessities.

"What the Standard tells us is that lower-wage jobs alone – even those well above the minimum wage – simply do not allow families to meet their needs, even at a minimally adequate level," said Dr. Pearce. "Unfortunately, many families do not earn self-sufficiency wages, particularly if they have recently entered the workforce. They cannot afford their housing and food and child care, much less their other basic needs, forcing them to make painful choices between necessities, or to accept substandard or inadequate child care, insufficient food or substandard housing."

The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Washington State also examines the effects that existing public assistance policies have on the family budget to show how government supports can help families on their path to self-sufficiency. The report is designed to serve as a tool for caseworkers, service providers, employers, advocates and policy makers to assist them in helping working families achieve self-sufficiency.

"This report will provide families, social service agencies, policy makers and advocates with the information they need to understand the minimum income families in Washington require to move beyond living in poverty to become economically independent," said the Rev. John Boonstra, Executive Minister of the Washington Association of Churches. "Searching for the common good in this state includes a decent quality of life and the jobs and wages which will support it."

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Add One

“Across the country, we’re finding that families – especially with young children – require incomes well above the federal poverty level to meet their needs,” said Jennifer Brooks, WOW’s Director of Self-Sufficiency Programs and Policy. “To get those incomes, employers need to pay adequate wages and provide benefits; government needs to ensure access to education and training and work supports to lower costs; and individuals need to take advantage of opportunities to invest in themselves.”

The Washington Association of Churches (WAC) is the statewide ecumenical organization of Protestant and Roman Catholic judicatories in Washington. The WAC worked with member organizations of the Washington Living Wage Movement and more than 10 organizations that came together to assist in shaping the Washington Self-Sufficiency Standard. These organizations have a history of collaboration in confronting poverty through the promotion of strategies to enhance training, education and job opportunities for working people, while ensuring just and compassionate supports when needed.

Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) is a 37-year old national women’s employment organization that works to achieve economic independence and equality of opportunity for women and girls. WOW leads the Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Project – a national project to develop the Self-Sufficiency Standard in states across the country; coordinates the National Workforce Network – a network of women’s service and training organizations in all 50 states that reaches more than a million women and girls every year; and is a leader in the areas of nontraditional employment, literacy and welfare-to-work strategies.

To obtain copies of *The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Washington State*, please contact Michael Ramos or Sara Fleming Merten at (206) 625-9790, or download a copy at www.SixStrategies.org. For more information about the Self-Sufficiency Standard in other states, contact WOW at (202) 638-3143.