Buncombe County Living Wage Rate Announcement Postponed

[ASHEVILLE, NC] —
At the end of each year, Just Economics of WNC reassesses the local living wage rate using the Universal Living Wage Formula, which indexes wages to the local cost of housing set each year by HUD’s Fair Market Rents (FMR) for the Asheville, NC Metropolitan Area. Just Economics adjusts the local wage rate only if there is a 3% or greater change. The last increase was January 1, 2019.

This year, a HUD representative informed Just Economics that a reevaluation of the Asheville FMRs was requested by the Asheville Housing Authority and a review process is underway. The representative explained that “data supporting reevaluation requests are due to HUD by January 10, 2020. HUD will then evaluate the submitted data and calculate revised FY2020 FMRs if necessary. HUD will publish a Federal Register notice announcing revised FMRs, in February 2020. The revised FMRs become effective 30 days after publication. The reevaluation request covers all FMRs.”

To ensure accuracy of the living wage rate, Just Economics will be postponing its announcement of the 2020 living wage rate for Buncombe County until the review of the HUD data is complete. In the meantime, the organization will continue to recognize the living wage rate as $13.65 or $12.15 with employer provided health benefits in Buncombe County.

Starting January 1st, Just Economics is also recognizing a rural living wage rate of $12.60/ hour in WNC counties outside of Buncombe County. This rate is calculated as 210% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines divided by 2080 (40 hours per week, 52 weeks per year), rounded to the nearest nickel and is recalculated every other year.

The organization will update living wage employers, including the City of Asheville, and the public when the new rate is determined.

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Just Economics of Western North Carolina (JE) is a regional organization based in Asheville, NC. It’s mission is to educate, advocate and organize around affordable housing, living wages and transit and to work toward a just and sustainable economy for all. JE’s work is directed by affected people’s including low wage workers, necessity bus riders and those facing housing insecurity.

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