

Initiative Measure 1 offers proven policies to fix Burien’s flawed minimum wage

Burien’s minimum wage ordinance leaves an estimated 47% of people working in the city under a lower wage standard, and is weaker than such laws in other Washington localities:

- Excludes people working in small businesses (71% of local establishments) and creates a reduced minimum wage for those working in medium businesses (12% of local establishments).
- Allows larger businesses to pay lower wages (meant for medium or small businesses) by counting:
 - Only employment in King County (just 1% of U.S. total),
 - Full-time equivalent employees instead of total (reducing count by 10%-26%), and
 - Employment at connected franchises (like Wendy’s or McDonald’s) as separate businesses.
- Provides only a partial cost-of-living adjustment that won’t keep up with inflation.
- Allows tips and the value of medical benefits to be counted toward paying minimum wage.
- Slows people’s access to private legal action if their employer refuses to pay the minimum wage.

Initiative Measure 1 covers everyone working in Burien with a strong minimum wage using practical, effective policies proven by experience in other Washington localities:

- Covers everyone by using a 3- or 6-year phase-in for medium or small businesses, respectively.
- Accurately classifies business size for wage thresholds by counting:
 - Total employment (all full- and part-time employees at all locations), and
 - Employment at connected franchises (like Wendy’s or McDonald’s) as one business.
- Provides a full cost-of-living adjustment that keeps up with inflation.
- Requires tips (and voluntary employer medical benefits) to be paid in addition to minimum wage.
- Preserves people’s access to private legal action if their employer refuses to pay minimum wage.
- Requires large/medium businesses to offer hours to current part-time staff before hiring new ones.

Initiative Measure 1 will provide a higher minimum wage for more Burien workers over time:

Table 1: Burien’s minimum wage in 2025

| | “Large” business | “Medium” business | “Small” business |
|---------------------------|--|---|--|
| Initiative Meas. 1 | 500+ employees total: \$21.10/hr. plus tips/benefits | 15 to 499 employees total: \$19.10/hr. plus tips/benefits | Less than 15 employees total: \$18.10/hr. plus tips/benefits |
| Current Law | ~600+ employees in King County (500+ FTEs): \$21.16/hr. minus tips/benefits | ~25-599 employees in King County (21 to 499 FTEs): \$20.16/hr. minus tips/benefits | Less than ~25 employees in King County (20 or less FTEs): \$16.66/hr. minus tips/benefits |

Table 2: Burien’s minimum wage in 2031*

| | “Large” business | “Medium” business | “Small” business |
|---------------------------|---|---|--|
| Initiative Meas. 1 | All business sizes (after 3- or 6-year phase-in for medium or small businesses, respectively): \$24.47/hr. plus tips/benefits | | |
| Current Law | ~600+ employees in King County (500+ FTEs): \$23.82/hr. minus tips/benefits | ~23-599 employees in King County (21 to 499 FTEs): \$22.82/hr. minus tips/benefits | Less than ~25 employees in King County (20 or less FTEs): \$19.32/hr. minus tips/benefits |

*Assumes 2.5% annual cost-of-living adjustment for inflation.

Comparison: Current minimum wage law versus Initiative Measure 1

| | Current law | Initiative Measure 1 |
|---|--|--|
| Summary | Fewer people covered by a lower wage over time. Weaker standards overall than found in King County, Bellingham, Everett, Renton, SeaTac, Seattle, and Tukwila minimum wage laws. | Every person covered by a higher wage over time. Strong standards overall, similar to King County, Bellingham, Everett, Renton, SeaTac, Seattle, and Tukwila minimum wage laws. |
| Coverage | Excludes small businesses (71% of establishments) and reduces the minimum wage for medium-size businesses (12% of establishments) – leaving an estimated 47% of people working in Burien under a lower standard. | Covers all people working in Burien with the same minimum wage standard by 2031, using a 3- or 6-year phase-in for medium or small businesses, respectively. |
| Business Size for Wage Standards | Counts only full-time equivalent employees (FTEs) in King County (1% of the U.S. total) to determine business size. <i>For example: a large business with 5,000 total employees, of which 500 work in King County, would typically have about 410 FTEs and so would pay the lower “medium business” minimum wage.</i> Allows employment at financially connected franchises (like Wendy’s or McDonald’s) to be counted separately, classifying more of them as medium or small businesses with a lower wage. | Counts total employment (all full- and part-time employees at all locations) to determine business size. <i>For example: a large business with 5,000 total employees would pay the higher “large business” minimum wage to people working in Burien, no matter how many of those employees work in King County.</i> Ensures employment at financially connected franchises (like Wendy’s or McDonald’s) is counted together to accurately determine business size with appropriate minimum wage. |
| Tips, Benefits and Inflation Adjustments | Tips (and the value of medical benefits) can be counted by an employer toward minimum wage. Minimum wage is a flat additional increment – with no yearly inflation/cost-of-living adjustment – added to Washington’s minimum wage. | Tips (and voluntary employer medical benefits) must be paid in addition to minimum wage. Minimum wage is independently calculated for Burien and receives a full yearly inflation/cost-of-living adjustment. |
| Worker Rights | If an employer refuses to pay minimum wage, requires employee to give written notice to employer, wait 45 days, and exhaust all state administrative remedies before taking private legal action. | If an employer refuses to pay minimum wage, does not restrict employee’s decisions/timing on private legal action. Large and medium businesses must offer available hours to current part-time employees before hiring new ones. |

Information current as of January 13, 2025. Based on the Economic Opportunity Institute’s analysis of City of Burien Ordinance 855, City of Burien Initiative Measure 1, 2022 Economic Census ([US Census](#)), 2021 Statistics of U.S. Businesses Annual Data Tables by Establishment Industry ([US Census](#)), 2023 Employees by Industry and Full-Time Equivalent Employees by Industry ([US Bureau of Economic Analysis](#)), and 2022 Covered Employment (QCEW) ([WA Employment Security Department](#)).