



Labor Day weekend is a time to honor workers, especially those who struggle to earn living wages and make ends meet. Major faith traditions encourage and respect hard work, but also call for workers to be treated with respect and dignity and paid living wages.

Virginia United Ways' 2023 Report, *ALICE in the Crosscurrents: COVID and Financial Hardship in Virginia*, documents how 38 percent of households in Virginia had incomes below the ALICE threshold of financial survival. This threshold includes the real costs for families, such as housing, healthcare, and childcare. As the report says, **"The crux of the problem is a mismatch between earnings and the costs of basics."**

Workers in Virginia do not earn enough to cover the high costs of housing, utilities, healthcare, childcare and transportation. Although there are clearly things individuals can do, this gross mismatch is a structural problem requiring policy interventions. For more than 40 years, Virginia's faith communities have partnered with the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy (VICPP) to provide a faith voice on Virginia's policies and practices. Together people of faith have worked to expand Medicaid to working families, raise the minimum wage, stop and deter wage theft, and limit predatory lending. Learn more at [www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org](http://www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org).

**Continue reading to see how you can support workers and advocate better policies for workers with VICPP!**

## **Five Things you Can do to Support Workers – Labor Day and Beyond**

- 1) **Pray for all workers**, but especially essential workers who kept Virginia's economy functioning during the pandemic.
- 2) **Tip generously and speak kindly.** Workers who earn their livelihood through tips and interactions with customers are not always treated well. Tip generously and speak kindly with workers who wait on or serve you.
- 3) **Be watchful against wage theft.** Wage theft, the illegal cheating of workers' wages, is common practice in many low-wage sectors, such as landscape, restaurants, residential construction, retail, and others. If you, your congregation, or your place of businesses, hire contracted services, make sure that workers are paid legally and fairly. Otherwise, you may inadvertently be contributing to wage theft. For more information, visit [www.wagetheftva.org](http://www.wagetheftva.org).
- 4) **Support businesses that pay living wages.** Learn more about Virginia Living Wage Certification program at [www.virginialivingwages.org](http://www.virginialivingwages.org). Apply to have your business or congregation be living wage certified and invite businesses (and congregations) you patron to do so too.
- 5) **Advocate policies that will help workers in low-paying jobs.** Sign up to receive VICPP's Action Alerts to impact Virginia's policies such as increasing the minimum wage, setting a paid sick day standard, combatting child labor, and increasing childcare assistance.