

Contact: Jeffrey N. Maclin  
(212) 614-5538 (office)  
(718) 309-2346 (cell)  
[jmaclin@cssny.org](mailto:jmaclin@cssny.org)

November 22, 2011

**Statement by David R. Jones, President and CEO of the Community Service Society, on  
Living Wage Legislation**

Last night, an estimated 3,000 people packed Riverside Church where they heard a procession of clergy, politicians, labor leaders, workers, and advocates voice their support for legislation requiring major businesses and developers that receive taxpayer funded financial assistance to pay workers a fair wage.

Today, the City Council will hold a hearing on the Fair Wages for New Yorkers Act. Living wage legislation has been enacted in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Cleveland, and Pittsburg. To my knowledge, there has been no mass exodus of businesses in those cities as a result. Only in New York City, it seems, does the notion of offering workers a fair wage engender fears of economic calamity. With the latest Census Bureau report showing 1.6 million New Yorkers now living in poverty – numbers that will likely increase – the city needs to act to improve wages and benefits for the working poor so that employment becomes a viable path to economic security.

As our latest *Unheard Third* survey shows, New Yorkers working full-time jobs at poverty wages cannot escape hardships. Nearly 20 percent of those polled reported going hungry because there was not enough money to buy food. Another 29 percent could not fill a prescription due to lack of money or insurance. And 34 percent fell behind in their rent or mortgage in the last year. The spike in the number of New Yorkers applying for food stamps further illustrates the economic challenges facing many New Yorkers.

We join with those who believe that creating decent wages for New Yorkers is not only an economic imperative, but indeed a moral issue. Living wage and paid sick leave legislation will help raise the floor on wages and benefits for low-income New Yorkers who are bearing the brunt of the economic downturn. Let's stop making excuses and get behind legislation that helps the working poor stay out of poverty.

####

---

*The Community Service Society of New York (CSS) draws on a 165-year history of excellence in addressing the root causes of economic disparity. Through applied research, advocacy, litigation, and innovative program models, we respond to urgent, contemporary challenges by advancing solutions that strengthen and benefit all New Yorkers.*