

State of Working North Carolina 2024: The Cost of Inaction

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North Carolina Justice Center –
Workers' Rights Project



NORTH CAROLINA

**JUSTICE
CENTER**



Housekeeping Tips and Reminders

- This event is being recorded.
- There will be time for questions at the end of the 30-minute presentation. **Please put any questions in the chat.**
- For IT concerns, please message Tim Hazlehurst or email Tim@ncjustice.org.

Overview

We looked at the costs of not having policies that support working people across five major policy areas:

- Minimum wage
- Unemployment insurance
- Paid family and medical leave
- Paid sick days
- Care economy supports

Wages

“There ain’t no saving money to do things with my child. There ain’t really much. I don’t know, it just seems like I worked for nothing because it’s gone when you get it.”

- Jamey Gunter, fast food worker in Mars Hill, NC



Origins of the minimum wage

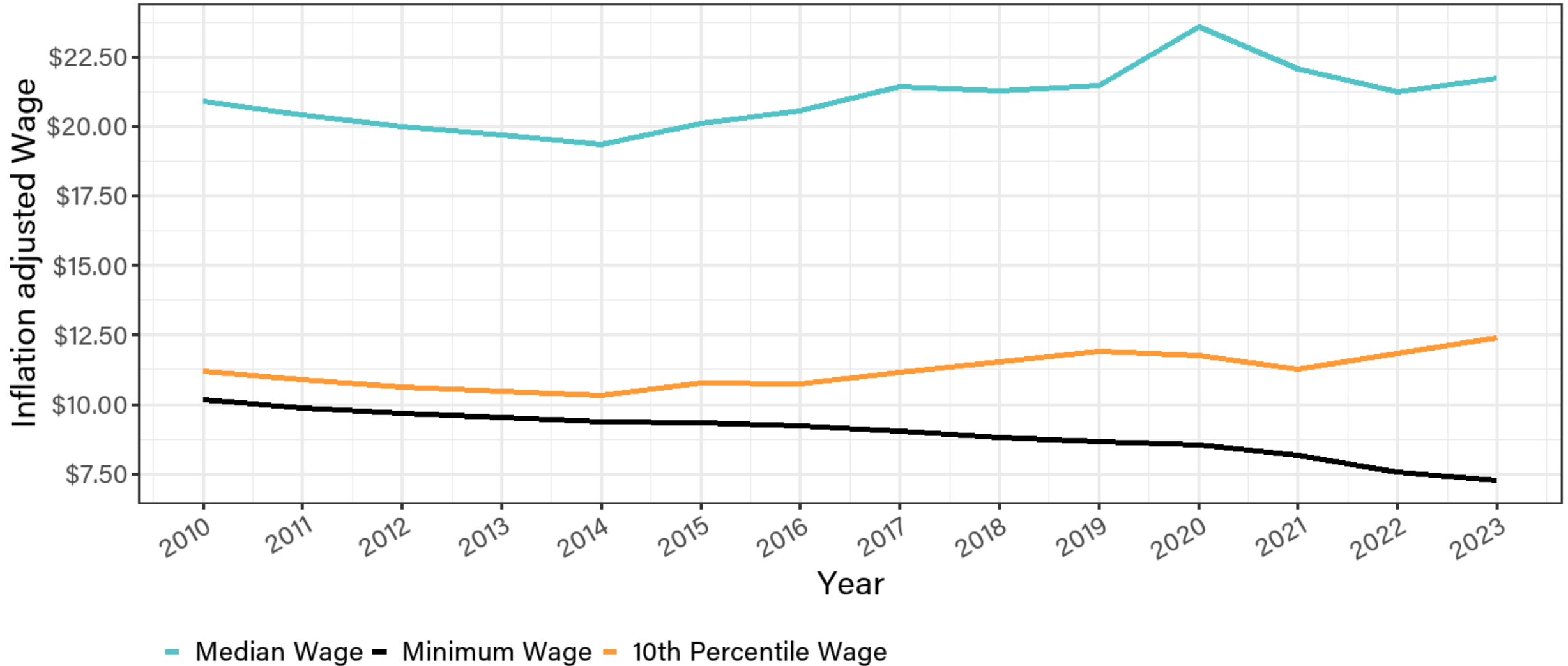
"It seems to me to be equally plain that no business which depends for existence on paying less than living wages to its workers has any right to continue in this country. By 'business' I mean the whole of commerce as well as the whole of industry; by workers I mean all workers, the white-collar class as well as the men in overalls; and by living wages, I mean more than a bare subsistence level-I mean the wages of *decent living*."

- Franklin D. Roosevelt



Median, 10th percentile, and minimum wage

North Carolina, 2010-2023, Inflation adjusted to 2023 \$



Data Source: Author's analysis of Economic Policy Institute Current Population Survey Extracts, Version 1.0.55, <https://microdata.epi.org>.

What is the lack of a livable minimum wage
costing us?

\$4.5 BILLION PER YEAR



Unemployment Insurance





“[The low unemployment benefits] affected me a lot because if I had an interview, I didn’t have gas to get to that interview. Thank goodness a lot of them were virtual, but if I didn’t pay my bill, I couldn’t use the internet, which I needed for the job search.”

– Tonya Mills, public school administrative assistant in Greensboro, NC

N.C. Unemployment Insurance metrics and rank among 50 states (1st quarter 2024)

Metric	U.S. average	N.C.	N.C. state rank
Percent of jobless workers receiving benefits	30.5%	11.0%	48 th
Average weekly benefit amount	\$458	\$305	42 nd
Average duration of benefits	15.1 weeks	9.2 weeks	44 th
Trust Fund Balance	\$1.17 billion	\$4.46 billion	2 nd
Trust Fund Balance Per 1,000 Civilian Labor Force	\$369	\$849	12 th

What is NC's inadequate UI system costing us?

\$1.57 BILLION PER YEAR



Paid Family & Medical Leave

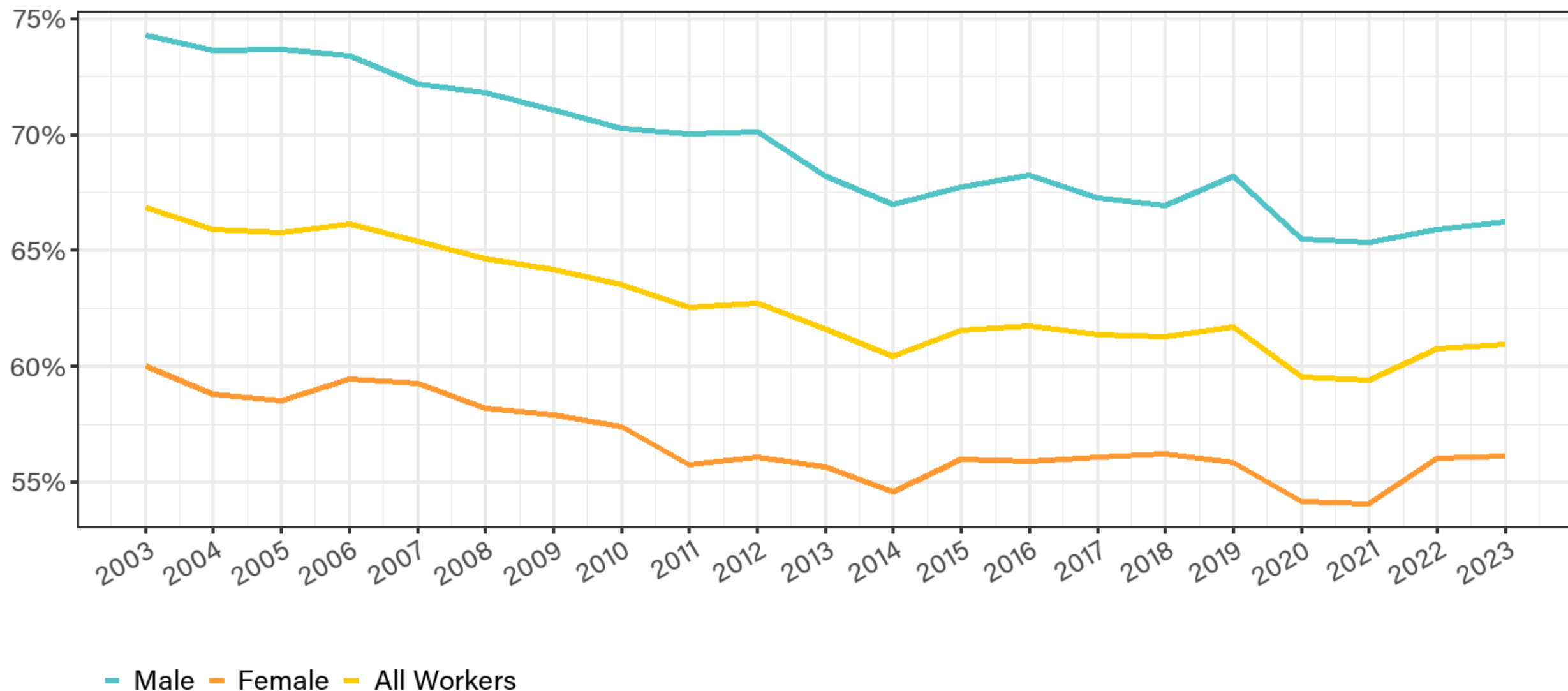
“I have a port where they give me the chemo. It’s this little thing in my chest up here, and they hook it up,” Hill said. “I still have to go to work with the port. I can’t afford not to, you know what I’m saying? I’d be homeless probably in a month with all my bills.”

- Mary Hill, Amazon worker in Garner, NC



Annual Labor Force Participation Rate by Sex

North Carolina, 2003-2023



Data Source: Author's analysis of Economic Policy Institute Current Population Survey Extracts, Version 1.0.55, <https://microdata.epi.org>.

How much is this costing us?

\$23 BILLION PER YEAR*



*Cost of combined impacts on women's workforce attrition



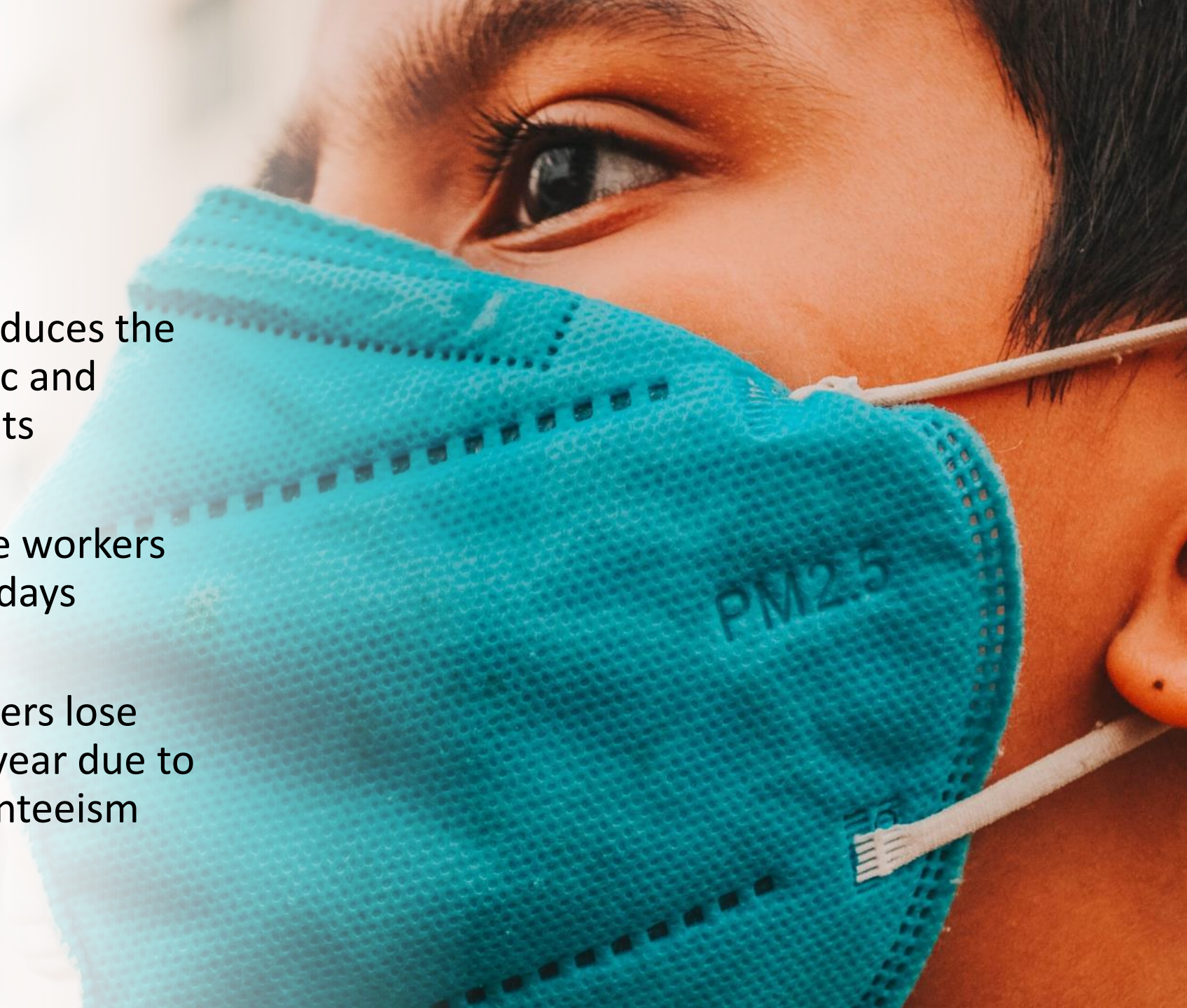
Paid Sick Days

“In the back of my mind knowing that the bills are not stopping, the rent is going to come. At the end of the day, I’m going to be in a financial bind that I’m going to have to, after this is over, work harder to pull myself out of. [Not having paid sick days] is just putting people in continuous holes of debt.”

- Aaron Williams, Chef/Entrepreneur in Greensboro, NC

PAID SICK DAYS

- Public health issue – Reduces the spread of illness – public and individual health benefits
- Equity issue – Low wage workers lack access to paid sick days
- Business issue - Employers lose billions of dollars each year due to presenteeism and absenteeism among sick workers



What does the lack of paid sick days cost us?



*business costs only; does not include workers' lost wages or costs to public health

Care Economy Supports

“I just was so excited to be pregnant and started telling some coworkers, and they were like, ‘Have you gotten on any waitlists yet?’ Didn’t even start with congratulations. But I quickly learned they were right.”

- Rachel Shelton, former public school teacher in Asheville, NC



It's not just childcare.

“You’re working like a dog and you’re working two or three jobs to make ends meet, and it’s still not enough for you because jobs are not paying what you are worth.”

-Christine Robinson, CNA
working in Raleigh, NC

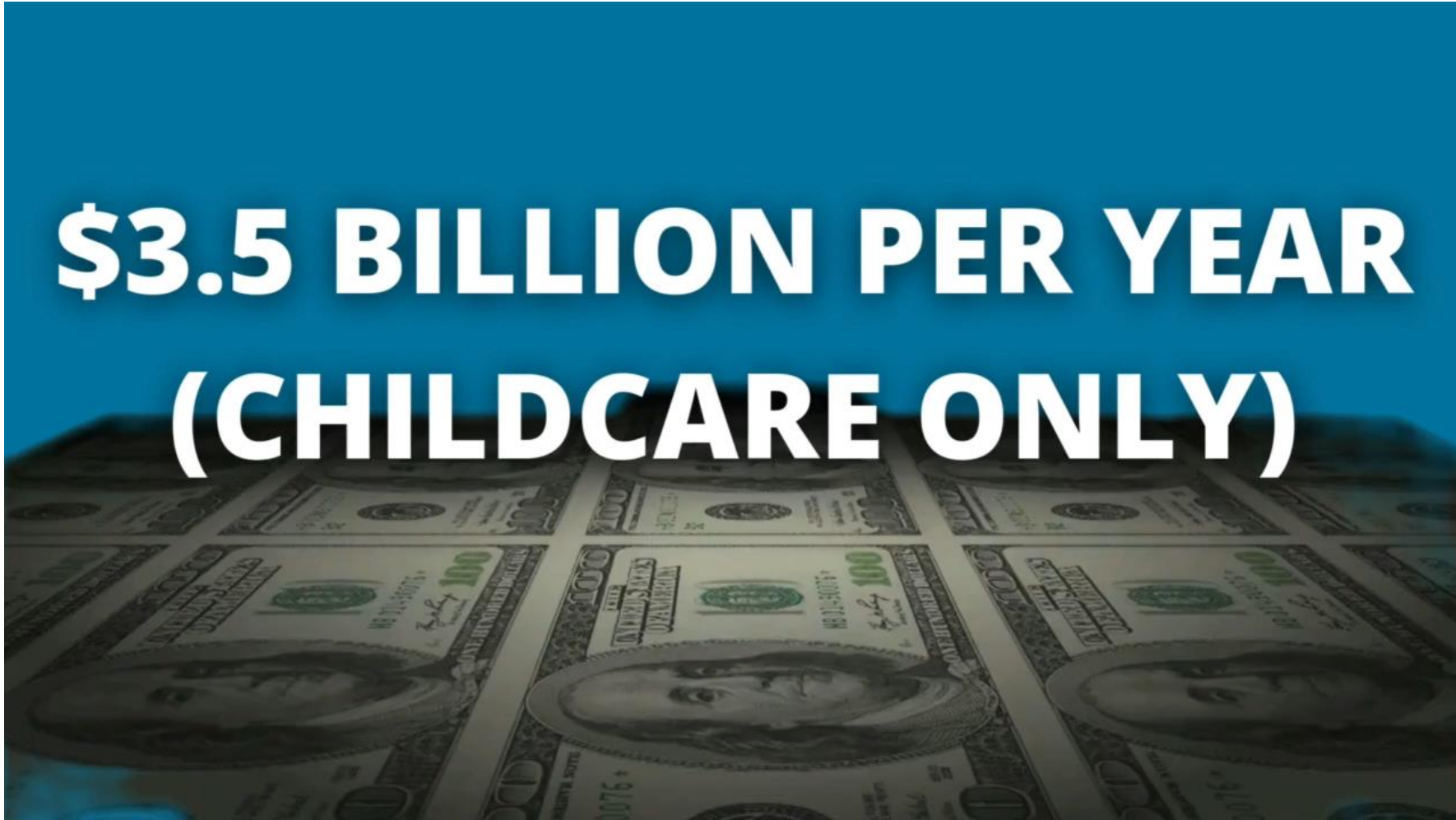


Table 4: Percent change in private sector annual average employment levels, 2019 to 2023, select industries

Industry	% change - 2019-2023
<i>Home health care services</i>	-3.8%
<i>Nursing care facilities, skilled nursing</i>	-14.8%
<i>Residential mental health facilities</i>	-2.3%
<i>Continuing care, assisted living facilities</i>	-8.2%
<i>Other residential care facilities</i>	-16.7%
<i>Vocational rehabilitation services</i>	-16.6%
<i>Child day care services</i>	2.6%

What is the lack of care investment costing us?

**\$3.5 BILLION PER YEAR
(CHILDCARE ONLY)**



We need policies that:



Improve wages and workforce supports like paid family and medical leave and paid sick days that working people can meet the needs of their families.



Increase public investment in direct care services.



Reform North Carolina's Unemployment Insurance program to support workers and insulate the broader economy.



QUESTIONS?