

For this McDonald's cook, wage hike could be more harm than help

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McDonald's grill cook Douglas Hunter is literally the poster child for a \$15 minimum wage: The Chicago man's picture and story are featured in the "Fight for \$15" national campaign.

Hunter's current pay of \$9.25 an hour leaves little left for the single father and his daughter, Serenity. When Hunter, 53, couldn't afford her junior prom outfit, he sewed a black-lace dress for her, even as they fought along the way about the hemline. "She picked the material," he said. "I got to pick the length."

Hunter's minimum pay goes to \$10 an hour in July, but a steep pay raise would bring unintended consequences for Hunter, a diabetic with multiple medical conditions whose care is covered by Cook County's program for the uninsured and poor.

At \$15 an hour, his annual income would become too high to qualify for CountyCare under the current income limit.

So any salary gains could be wiped out by the price of his medications and supplies, including two kinds of insulin at \$403 a month and drugs to control high cholesterol and blood pressure that add an extra \$330 a month.

And that's not including the syringes, health checkups and eyeglasses he receives for free, allowing him to avoid choosing between maintaining his health and providing for his teenager.

At \$15, he figures he'd need to reduce his total work hours to ensure his new income didn't disqualify him from his current benefits.