

I am a classified staff at Falconer-Chapman Grade School in Sheridan, Oregon. I'm an instructional assistant. I worked for 5 years in the behavioral program at the FCS and now I work in Title I and ELL. I love my job. Here is my story.

In 2009 I was hired by the school district I now work for. Starting wage was \$4.00 less an hour than my previous job. (My previous job was as a family support worker for a non-profit. When the economy crashed so did the funding for that job.) I was hired at about \$11.24 an hour. That was a blow to the family budget. What I didn't realize was that out of this I would not only have to pay the usual insurance, taxes, union dues and other standard deductions, but because unemployment is not an option they automatically take out part of my pay check and set it aside so that I can receive it over the summer months. So, this makes my monthly bring home check about \$708 dollars a month. I work 38.5 hours a week. I make \$12.95 an hour. How are people supposed to live off this? That is less than 40% of my check.

The only reason I have been able to make it is I am receiving SSI benefits for my son because his father died in 2007. This support ends this summer when he turns 18. I take pride in myself as I have become self-sufficient. I was able to get off all government assistance. We saved our tax refund and were able to buy an older manufactured home for cash in order to prepare for the day when we would no longer have the SSI benefits. Space rent is \$425 a month. Do the math that doesn't leave me much too live, does it? I didn't qualify for any government assistance in the past 5 years because on paper I made \$7.50 too much a month^[1]. This a result of me seeking additional employment during the summer months. I have worked at Boy Scout Camps as a head chef for 5 of the past 6 years. (It is sad when I can bring home more money from a BSA camp in two weeks than I can working at my regular job for a whole month.)

No other job, to my knowledge, puts money aside out of the employee's paycheck so that they do not have to pay unemployment later. When there is no work...isn't that what unemployment is for? I have paid into unemployment for over 33 years. I pay it just like the next person. So, why do I not get to use it? It sure would be nice if this could be remedied soon. It's like telling people. "Hey, you don't really count as a real employee. Sure, you come back year after year. Put up with angry parents, sick kids, understaffed schools and spend your own money to make sure kids get the education you know they deserve. We just don't think that you deserve to have the other benefits of every other qualified employee gets in the US. See ya, next year." Really? When did we become a society that separates people into groups of who qualifies for unemployment and those that don't? I work. I work hard. This is unfair and totally discriminatory.

Let's do what we can to change this unfair practice.

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