

April 13, 2015

To: House Business & Labor Committee
From: Kasil Kapriel, Airport Worker
Re: Support of SB 610 and HB 2009

Dear Chairman Holvey and Committee Members,

Thank you for inviting me to tell you my story today. My name is Kasil Kapriel. I moved from the Federal States of Micronesia to America eight years ago in search of a better life. When I arrived in Portland, I dreamed of finding a job, settling down, and providing my three kids with a good education. I was able to get a job at Portland International Airport, where I still work as a passenger service agent. My job at PDX involves helping passengers in wheelchairs get around the airport. Wherever folks need to go – the ticket counter, car rental, departure gate, or the coffee shop – I'm there to help them.

When I started my job at the airport, the pay was minimum wage. After 8 years, I am still working for minimum wage, now \$9.25 an hour. Every day, I give all of my effort at my job, but there is no path towards getting a raise or any type of benefits. Even with all of the effort that I put into my job, I still struggle. I'm a single mother and it is difficult to balance the needs of my kids with a full-time job. Because I am Micronesian and under the Compact of Free Association, I cannot access public health insurance in the United States. The only way that I would be able to have health insurance is through our work, but the insurance my employer provides is very expensive and I cannot afford it, even though I have been here working for the same company for 8 years.

In the last two years, my rent has gone up three times. Last month it went up by 100 dollars. Every month, I have to pay 75 dollars extra to my landlord, so I can pay half of my rent each paycheck. I'm a single mom I live near the airport with my three kids – I like our apartment and I don't want to move, but I don't know how I'll be able to keep up with rent. At the end of last year, my hours were cut from 40 to 32. Now, it's even harder to pay rent on time.

If we raised the minimum wage, I would be able to take home more money each paycheck – money I could use to pay my rent on time and save for my children's education. Most importantly, I would feel like I was treated with respect for the work I do.

When I came to the US, I didn't think it would be like this. Now I just hold on to the only job that I know. Now I just work hard and try to show my value. The dreams I had haven't worked out. I just work to survive. It would be better if we made a fair wage.

Right now, the Oregon legislature is considering raising the state's minimum wage. It's time they take action to support Oregon's working families.

Sincerely,

FIRST AND LAST NAME