

Chairs and Members of the Senate Workforce and House Business and Labor Committees,

I have been an employee in the special education department with the Sweet Home School District #55 since 1995. I first provided literary Braille transcription including math and science notations at the high school level. I have also provided certified Red Cross water safety instruction, and provided job site work skills and work ethics training to students with a wide variety of abilities.

Currently, my work entails providing reading development strategies in the High School Learning Resource Center. But, incredibly, after 20 years in education, my hourly wage has reached the top step and is under \$15 an hour. Having served on the Joint Labor Management Committee in the Sweet Home School District, I have personally watched as many skilled district employees lost their hours per week, hours per day, and hours per year while facing increased workloads, increased medical costs, and increased insurance costs. Many have simply lost too much to continue giving so much for less and less. So we have continued to lose these dedicated qualified individuals.

As you know it is important to maintain a capable, educated, staff with high ethics and integrity. The reality is, though, it has become increasingly difficult to even justify my own employment within the education system. After 20 years in education, I currently receive only \$14.72 an hour for my services. This is incredible.

In closing, I would like to quote my former superintendent: "I wouldn't work for those wages."

As the leaders of our state, it is now up to you to help change the minimum wage to a "living wage" so that Oregonians can live.

Thank you.

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me.

Lisa Gourley
Sweet Home, Oregon