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Salem Area Chamber of Commerce
1110 Commercial Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301
503-581-1466; Fax 503-581-0972
Salemchamber.org

April 13, 2015

From: Salem Area Chamber of Commerce
To: House Business and Labor & Senate Workforce Committees
Re: Mandated Minimum Wage Increases beyond CPI Increases in Oregon Law

The Salem Area Chamber of Commerce exists to provide its members and the business community in general with the tools, resources and education necessary to run and grow their businesses. We advocate for sound and effective public policy that will enhance our members' ability to grow business and provide jobs for area residents.

Sadly, as referenced in previous letters to this body, this Chamber and our membership are growing increasingly concerned with both A) laws that create unnecessary hardships for business and unintended consequences for the public, and B) a perceived "philosophical shift" amongst lawmakers that is quickly labeling Oregon as a difficult place to start, run and grow business.

With regard to the minimum wage bills being discussed, the Salem Chamber is opposed in very strong terms to artificial wage increases that result from state or local municipality interference. We support wage growth and economic opportunity that is organically provided by a strong economy, robust sales and good margins. A rising tide does indeed lift all ships.

There have been numerous examples provided by local businesses concerned with the worrisome realities of absorbing artificial wage hikes. Balance sheets don't lie, and the reality is that owners will have to make some tough decisions. Employee hours will likely be cut, consumer prices for local goods and services will be forced up, and in some cases, layoffs will result as business owners do all they can to maintain operating margins.

We believe that many of us have the same goal in mind as it relates to minimum wage or other legislation being proposed and considered this session - improving the lives of hard working Oregonians. The right way to do this is to create good policy that makes it easier for businesses to grow, not harder.

Artificial wage hikes will unfortunately damage the very engine in Oregon that helps create opportunity for Oregonians. Please join us in opposing these damaging and artificial wage hike proposals.

Sincerely,

Chief Executive Officer
Salem Area Chamber of Commerce
Cell Phone: 503-302-5060