

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

I work as a Special Education Assistant at the K-8 school in Lincoln County. I also work as a teacher assistant for the after school program. Between both jobs, I am lucky to get 40 hours a week depending on how many days we have for the after school program per month. On average, I take home \$1000.00 a month. I am a single mom with 2 kids living with me. My rent per month is \$792.00! I cannot get any assistance because they say I make too much money! With that \$1000.00 a month, I also have to buy food, \$ 300.00-500.00 per month, pay car insurance \$249.00 a month, electricity—avg. \$ 75.00 a month (higher in winter a little lower in summer), water—avg. \$62.00 a month, and of course gas to get to and from work about \$100.00 a month. As you can see, just the basics. I have a pay as you go phone, no tv, no going out. HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO LIVE ON \$1000.00 A MONTH?

I forgot to add all the medical bills of over \$6000.00 that I have stacked up and threats of being sued because I cannot pay them and although I do have school insurance, it PAYS NOTHING or extremely little. The medicine I have to purchase can be about \$89.00 per month as long as I can get generic brands. Car repairs, clothing, personal items, etc! Would you please explain to me how the average person is SUPPOSED to survive and raise a family on this kind of money? Working in special education, we should get a higher pay. Do you know what we go through every day? Being pushed, knocked down, chairs thrown at us, screamed at, spit on and of course being called colorful words, being called stupid and knowing how to address the the challenge of "I don't have to, you can't make me." We need hazard pay! Three of my co-workers have ended up in the ER this year because of the work they do regularly with special ed. students. Don't get me wrong, I like my job, but I cannot live on what I am making. There are really no benefits, except the joy of helping a kid learn.

My daughter, a senior in high school has been looking for a job for over 6 months with only finding temp work, usually as a babysitter and she is a smart person. There are 3 of us living in my house and I am supporting all of us on only \$1000.00 A MONTH! I would like to ask which one of you would like to change places with me and let ME live on YOUR SALARY! To top everything off, we have been told that we may not even have jobs next year, because there is NO MONEY for education. What am I supposed to live on then?

Thanks,

Cheryl Erickson
Special Education Assistant