

April 13, 2015

To: Senate Workforce and House Business and Labor Committees

From: Christine Palmer

Re: Support of SB 610 and HB 2009

Dear Chairs Dembrow and Holvey and Committee Members,

My name is Christine Palmer. I am proud to be here to share my story, which is the story of so many Oregonians in this building and out in homes and businesses throughout Oregon.

Growing up living in modest mobile homes in rural Oregon and Idaho I dreamed that someday I would earn a college degree and become a teacher of young children. The dream to complete a college degree, as well as other professional certifications came true for me, as did my desire to become an early childhood educator. I am proud to say that I am a teacher who for the past 18 years has provided education and holistic care to children in the most critical formative period of their development.

These accomplishments did not come easily. For years I worked long hours, at times juggling two or three jobs to make ends meet. Now, after nearly two decades of long days teaching, and late nights completing homework I earn \$13.82 cents an hour, and I am one of the lucky ones. Many of my colleagues earn just \$10 to \$12 dollars an hour, not enough to make it on their own.

I worked and continue to work hard, and because of that many of my dreams have come true. Unfortunately the American dream that I heard about growing up remains elusive for me and countless others. There are times when my husband and I wonder if we will ever be able to own our own home, purchase a quality functioning car, or have a stable savings account.

Raising the minimum wage to a living wage would enable hard working citizens like me to take a step closer to the American Dream.

Each and every day I teach children how to be good citizens. I teach them to not be greedy, to be thoughtful of others, and to share our classroom resources in an equitable manner. The spirit of this Bill aligns with those very values.

When you think about this Bill think about Max, a six year old student at the Opal school who said, "I give the gift of paying attention. When pay attention to each other we come to a place in the middle called helping."

It is high time the folks at the top learn how to pay attention to people in the disappearing middle class. It is vital that you our elected representatives pay attention to the struggles of everyday citizens. If we follow Max's advice and all pay attention we can come to a place in the middle called helping. Not ignoring, not enabling or giving, but working together to help keep the American dream alive.

Thank You