



April 13, 2015

To: Senate Workforce and House Business and Labor Committees

From: Jim Houser, co-owner, Hawthorne Auto Clinic and Co-Chair, The Main Street Alliance of Oregon

Re: Support SB 610 & HB 2009

Dear Chair Dembrow, Chair Holvey and Committee Members,

My name is Jim Houser and my wife and I own and operate Hawthorne Auto Clinic in SE Portland. I am also Co-chair of Main Street Alliance of Oregon, a network of over 2500 small business owners from across Oregon. I, and The Main Street Alliance of Oregon, support improving the minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2018. (An increase that is will add \$3.2 Billion into the Oregon economy by 2018.)

Let me tell you about small business's stake in this Improved Minimum Wage campaign. Hawthorne Auto Clinic is celebrating its 32nd anniversary this month, so I think I know a thing or two about small business success.

Our principle business asset, next to our customers, is our employees. I believe, and experience has borne me out, that if you take care of your employees they will take care of you. We provide good wages and benefits, including to our student interns and lower-wage workers, and have for all of our 32 years. The average tenure of our 9 full-time employees is 17 years. That kind of employee loyalty is critical to the success of any small business.

Most small business people understand this basic business reality. The biggest hurdle small business owners face in being able to provide decent wages and benefits is competition with national chains, like McDonalds and Wal-Marts, who are notorious for driving down the cost of labor by suppressing wages and benefits. As much as we would like not to be, small business owners are often trapped by the power of the multinationals.

Reasonable employment standards, such as the proposed increase in the minimum wage, levels the business playing field by requiring all employers to play by the same rules, enabling small business owners to do what they know needs to be done, like paying living wages, for their enterprises to thrive.

Like I said, I believe that if we take care of our employees, they will take care of us, and our businesses will grow and prosper. At the end of the day, a decent minimum wage is really just a basic employment standard, like worker's compensation or our child labor rules. That is why I support an increased minimum wage for all of Oregon. It's not only the smart thing to do; it is the right thing to do.

Thank you.

Jim Houser
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