

April 13, 2015

To: Senate Workforce Committee  
From: Justin Norton-Kertson, 15 Now Oregon  
Re: Support of SB 610 and HB 2009

Dear Chair Dembrow and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to be here. My name is Justin Norton-Kertson and I'm a representative of 15 Now Oregon.

Oregon's economy has grown at three times the national rate, but the recovery has hardly been felt by working people because wages have been stagnant for decades and have not kept pace with the cost of living. You have an opportunity to change that by take a strong stand for Oregon's working people and passing a \$15 minimum wage.

Studies from the University of Washington, the Alliance for a Just Society, and the National Low Income Housing Coalition all place a living wage for Oregon at above \$15 per hour. So it's not just that \$15 is a nationwide movement, rather it's that \$15 is the right number for Oregon.

Right now some 600,000 working Oregonians earn poverty wages. Some 200,000 make so-little that they are still eligible for public benefits, and Oregon taxpayers pay over \$1.7 billion per year to subsidize the low wages of massively wealthy corporations that pay little to no taxes here in Oregon.

But raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour will benefit both workers and businesses. More people with more money to spend is good for local economies and for small businesses. A \$15 minimum wage will inject some \$3 billion in new spending into our economy. Too many good paying jobs has never been a problem for any economy, anywhere.

That is why anything less than \$15 isn't enough. It isn't enough for Ian, a college graduate living in Eugene and working at a call center for poverty wages. It isn't enough Janice, who works drives a school bus in Portland, but struggles to pay her bills.

It is time for working people in Oregon to get their fair share of the wealth and the strong economy they have helped to create. We can ensure that no one who works lives in poverty, or we can keep wasting tax dollars to subsidize the poverty wages of these big corporations.

Think about that...no one who works should live in poverty. This basic moral value is why over 100 labor unions and community organizations have joined the Fight for \$15 in Oregon. Why we've engaged hundreds of volunteers from all over the state. Why thousands of Oregonians have signed petitions supporting \$15 and are ready to act. It's why this Wednesday rallies, marches, and worksite actions for \$15 will take place all over the state as part of a national day of action for \$15. The working people of Oregon have been activated. And we demanding \$15 now.

No one who works should live poverty. You have opportunity to help make this basic moral value a reality in Oregon. \$15 is the right number and 15 Now will not compromise on this because anything less is not enough, because this is about what is right for working people, not about what deal can be struck with big business. We call on this committee and the state legislature and demand that Oregon's minimum wage be raised to \$15 per hour. If you fail to act, this movement will still win.

Sincerely,

Justin Norton-Kertson  
15 Now Oregon