

April 13, 2015

To: Senate Workforce and House Business and Labor Committees
From: Linda Peterson
Re: Support of SB 610 and HB 2009

Dear Chairs Dembrow and Holvey and Committee Members,

My name is Linda Peterson, president of AFSCME Local 3214 in Eugene, Oregon. I am Linda Peterson, a 61 year old, a low wage direct care worker. In the winter, I don't turn on my heat unless the temperature drops below 30 degrees. I pick which utility I will wait a month to pay because I have to make my car insurance, which is my priority. I don't fill prescriptions that I cannot afford. I would love to visit my mother once a week, but she live rurally so I try to go once a month. I am glad my children are grown because I would not be able to afford rent, food, utilities. I don't go on vacation, my shoes I am wearing, I have had for more than five years. I can't afford a cell phone, so my son has me on his cell phone account because he is afraid of me being stranded between Eugene and Monroe, where I live. I have worked for my employer for 14 1/2 years. The price of everything has risen faster than my wages. I just want a wage that will let me live with some dignity.

We are all low wage direct care workers. We juggle which bills we can pay each month, can't afford health care for a spouse, are in danger of losing our job when our car breaks down. We can't make it without tax payer funded food stamps, family health care, free school lunches, telephone assistance, winter heating assistance, housing assistance, daycare assistance. When you work hard, you should have the dignity to be able to pay for all your basic necessities.

We are a part of the community and we know that a living wage would reduce the need for taxation to make up for substandard wages. We know that a living wage for honest work would be a boon for local businesses because we spend our money in the communities where we live. An economically sustainable community is one the realizes that the wages of community members are the customers that local businesses need, which in return adds the revenue base of the local cities and counties for better roads, services, and schools that attracts more businesses, which leads to more jobs and healthy growth. Of course, that means educating the workers that they spend their wages locally in return.

Creating a living wage base is a win-win for workers, children, local business, counties, cities and the state of Oregon.

Sincerely,

Linda Peterson