

April 13, 2015

To: Senate Workforce & House Business & Labor Committees  
From: Martha Santoyo  
Re: Support of SB 610 & HB 2009

Dear Chairs Dembrow and Holvey, and Committee Members,

My name is Martha Santoyo and I take care of the elderly. I work part time, approximately 96 hrs./month (24 hrs./week). I work with older people, taking care of them in their homes or in assisted living facilities. I drive to work from my home in McMinnville to Tigard or Newberg, sometimes even down to Salem, and work varying shifts of between 4 and 16 hours. I started this job recently. Before I was a Medical Assistant working for \$14.95/hr., which still wasn't enough to make ends meet, but I had benefits and worked full time, at least. I would go back to doing medical assistance, but I need to take continuing education classes and be recertified, which would cost about \$200 I don't have.

Right now, my biweekly paycheck is generally less than \$300. My husband works full time for \$11/hr. Together, we bring home \$1,600/month. With that, we have to support the two of us and three kids ages 12, 15, and 18. I attend paralegal classes twice a week. Sometimes I go to my first class at 7:15 a.m. and then stay on campus until my next class in the evening because if I went back home, I wouldn't be able to afford the gas. On those days, I get home well after 10 p.m. That's an entire day I could be spending with my kids. This last weekend, I worked 50 hours (with overtime) between Friday and Sunday to make sure I was able to pay my bills with my upcoming paycheck.

A wage increase for me will mean owning my own furniture and fixing my credit so that I can buy a house one day. Right now, we rent furniture from Rent-A-Center, which means paying really high interests, but we don't have a choice. Sometimes we miss payments and they take away our stuff. Right now, they're about to take our TV, and there's nothing we can do, but it'll be difficult to live without one with three kids in the house. My 15-year-old daughter could also continue attending Rugby practice, which right now keeps her focused on something positive and out of trouble. A wage raise will also mean we wouldn't run out of money in the middle of the month. My husband used to do landscaping on the side to earn more money, but he's been selling his landscaping equipment to tide us over. Eventually we'll have nothing left to sell and I don't know what we'll do then. Also, if we made more money, we wouldn't have to depend on the system anymore. I want to stop using public benefits so badly! But I do it for my family and so I can keep studying. My dream... no, my goal, is to get my paralegal certificate, get experience, and one day become an immigration attorney.

Thank you.