

April 13, 2015

To: Senate Workforce and House Business and Labor Committees
From: Peter Emerson, Owner, Bipartisan Cafe, Portland
Re: Support for SB 610 and HB 2009



Dear Chairs Dembrow and Holvey and Committee Members,

I am the owner of the Bipartisan Cafe in Portland, and a member of The Main Street Alliance of Oregon. **I, and The Main Street Alliance of Oregon, support SB 610 and HB 2009**, raising the Oregon minimum wage to \$15 by 2018.

10 years ago, I opened the Bipartisan Café. We sell coffee, sandwiches made to order, homemade soups, fresh baked goods and homemade pie—really good pie. Right now, we employ 24 people. Our staff starts out at minimum wage, so we would be directly impacted by any minimum wage raise. We want to pay our employees more, but only will be able to with a level playing field. If our competitors paid a higher minimum wage, we could afford to also.

I know that our employees would benefit from a higher wage, but so will businesses. When everyone can afford to take care of their health, afford transportation, housing, and other necessities and still have a little bit left over for a slice of pie at our cafe, our entire community thrives.

Work in the service industry can be tough, and that means there's a lot of turnover—which is costly! I strive to find and hire staff who feel they can have a future in the restaurant business—who look at it as a worthwhile endeavor, and not just a place holder. That means I've needed to get creative to attract and retain my employees. I work to create an environment, and provide benefits, like paid sick days, in order entice them to stay.

When I think about this issue, I know it affects more than just me, my business and my employees. This would really be a boost for our whole community. Money doesn't trickle down, it evaporates. So the lower on the economic scale that money is distributed, the more hands it touches before it ends up in the Bahamas or for the purchase of politicians. When minimum wage employees earn a higher wage, that money stays in my neighborhood. They spend money at businesses in my neighborhood, they in-turn come down and purchase my products. It's a cycle that thrives when there's investment, and comes to a screeching halt when that wealth is extracted, and sent out of the community.

When I hear business owners saying that raising the minimum wage will hurt their businesses, I ask them who shops in their stores? Who eats at their restaurants? Is it Corporate VP's, 1%ers, or working families—people at or near minimum wage? For most small businesses in Oregon, the answer is the latter—working families, like mine, are the ones who spend the most in our local communities. When our friends

and neighbors have more money in their pockets, it goes right back into the local economy.

Raising the minimum wage is good for business, it's good for Oregon. Please pass SB 610 & HB 2009.

Thanks you for your time,
Peter Emerson
Owner, The Bipartisan Cafe, Portland