

Dear Senate Workforce, House Business and Labor Committee,

When I was a struggling young mother working part time at a local bank, someone told me about Head Start. I wasn't at all familiar with the program at that time but I decided to enroll my children as a way to defer the cost of daycare. I soon learned what a wonderful program Head Start is and what amazing work Head Start does for low income families. I knew this was what I was meant to do.

I was inspired to enroll in college (the first one in my family to do so) and earn a degree in Early Childhood Education. I have now been working in education for the past twenty years, the last seventeen as a Lead Teacher/Advocate at Lane County Head Start. The work is very demanding. I work long hours and I am responsible for the education and health of the nineteen children in my care. I write and implement all of the [->the entire] curriculum for my classroom, individualize learning plans, visit families in their homes, and work closely with partnering agencies to ensure that the children are safe and well cared for. In addition I am required to meet both State and Federal mandates and deadlines.

Unfortunately my pay does not match the rigors of the job I am being asked to do. In the last seventeen years my pay has increased by only \$3.00 per hour. I now make a grand total of \$15.30 per hour. I was proud and gratified when my young daughter decided to follow my lead and earned a Master's degree in Special Education. I am saddened to say that because of *her* poor pay, her children now also qualify for Head Start.

I have always been proud to be an Oregonian. I feel that Oregon has a long history of innovation and pioneer spirit, from the bottle bill of the 1970's to the health care reform bills of the 1990's. It is time to put that spirit to work once more and approve an increase to Oregon's minimum wage. When the minimum wage increases it benefits all Oregonians and shows others that Oregon is a great place to live and raise a family. Please support SB 610 and HB 2009.

I appreciate this opportunity to be heard.

Sherry Beach
Head Start Teacher
Chapter President
OSEA 600