

Dear Senate Workforce and House Business and Labor Committee Members,

I am writing this testimonial to express my beliefs in the importance of raising the State minimum wage to \$15. I am a Lane County Head Start teacher working with families whose income qualifies their kids to enroll. This population works primarily minimum wage jobs and face many struggles. They struggle transporting their children to school, providing them healthy meals, safe housing, clothing, and shoes. They are doing the best they can with the money they earn. However, due to the high cost of living, this struggle is only increasing. If minimum wage was increased to \$15 families could self-transport their children to school as well as provide safer living conditions for their families.

In my role as a Teacher/Advocate I provide educational services along with family services. The goal is to end the cycle of poverty. And yet I too struggle to pay even the basics of life. Such as food, rent, utilities, clothing. It is becoming increasingly challenging in the last seven years I have worked for Head Start to spark the motivation needed for families to make different choices when I myself struggle. I make less than \$22,000 a year, and as a result I fall into a low income category low enough to send my daughter to Head Start. I was lucky in that she was in the expanded income eligible group of kids. I do not qualify for food stamps or other government supplemental programs; however, I am what one would consider the “working poor.” If the state minimum wage increased, my wages would increase. [what would you have more money to pay for? What would you do with the extra \$?]

I would like to continue to my hard work with children and families. But I need to earn a livable wage so that my daughter’s needs are met. I also strongly believe that everyone deserves to make a decent livable wage. As of right now, folks are few and far in between in making a decent wage. We need to put money back into the pockets of the working poor and this can only be done when the incomes of the bottom wage earners are increased through raising the state minimum wage. This increase will help offset the high cost of living.

In short, I witness poverty everyday through my work with families at Head Start. I also

consider myself the working poor as I struggle everyday financially and am a paycheck away from homelessness. If the state minimum wage increased, it would be a benefit to our local state economy as folks would be more able to spend the money they are earning as well as pay their debts. I urge all legislators to please consider all sides of this issue and really look at the benefit of all Oregonians making a decent wage so that they too can afford to live in our state. Please support SB 610 and HB 2009 and raise Oregon's minimum wage to \$15.

Sincerely,

Shanna Matti

Head Start Teacher

OSEA Chapter 600 Member