

April 13, 2015

To: Senate Workforce Committee

From: Stephen Michael, State Director, The Main Street Alliance of Oregon

Re: Support SB 610

Dear Chair Dembrow and Committee Members,

The Main Street Alliance of Oregon, a network of over 2500 small business owners across Oregon, supports SB 610, raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2018. It's not just the right thing to do, it would create an economic boom for Main Streets across our state.

Small business owners know that an investment in their employees is the best investment in their business they can make. Without well trained, happy, and healthy employees to help keep customers satisfied, and coming back, small businesses would fold. We rely on our staff to keep our businesses growing, and they rely on us for their livelihood. When our employees are well paid, they are happier and healthier—which leads to increased productivity, decreased turnover, and a successful business.

Furthermore, our members know that their employees are also their, and their neighbor's customers. The economics are pretty simple, more money in the pockets of minimum wage earners means a boost for the Oregon economy—a boost for Main Street businesses from Pendleton to Astoria and Hood River to Brookings.

In the course of our outreach, The Main Street Alliance of Oregon conducts a policy survey with the business owners we meet.

When asked, *"As a small business owner, what do you need most to create more jobs and get the economy back on track?"* **Over 68% responded "More customers"**—not "lower taxes," or "fewer regulations." Customers—small businesses need customers, and increased wages means that everyone will have more money in their pockets to spend in Main Street businesses.

Recently we've been asking a number of questions about the minimum wage and how an increase would impact their business. A number of these small business owners will be testifying in person this evening, and many others have submitted written testimony.

Over 90% of the business owners we talked to agreed that "Oregonians working full time should not be living in poverty," and 67% support a minimum wage increase.

Over two-thirds of small business owners we talked with think that Oregon's minimum wage is too low, and support an increase. Why? Simple—Main Street business owners are working families too. They understand what it's like to struggle to get by and want to make sure that

their employees can afford to be self-sufficient. Not only that, but small business owners know that when those earning the least in our communities can still afford to spend their hard-earned pay check in our local businesses, our economy thrives.

Not only is raising the minimum wage good for business, it's good for our state budget too. Currently, taxpayers spend well over a billion dollars every year to subsidize the corporations that rely on low-wage workers in Oregon. Large, extractive businesses depend on tax payer dollars to make up the difference in their employees' wages, while Main Street businesses are investing in our best asset—our people—and are paying our employees a salary they can actually live and support a family on. Most low wage workers are employed by large corporations like fast food and big box stores – not small businesses on Main Street.

The Main Street Alliance of Oregon, and the business owners we work with, ask you to help Oregon's small businesses thrive, pass this legislation that will help create economy-boosting jobs, put more money in our customers' pockets, and level the playing field for Main Streets across Oregon.

Pass SB 610—it's good for business, it's good for our economy, it's good for Oregon.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen Michael". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each word being significantly larger and more stylized than the others.

Stephen Michael
State Director, The Main Street Alliance of Oregon