

My name is Tracy Duerst and I represent Oregon Women for Agriculture, an all-volunteer group working to advocate and educate the public on the importance of farming and ranching to Oregon's economy. My husband's family farms on land in the Silverton Hills that was settled by their ancestors in 1877. I grew up in Silverton in the heart of one of the most diverse agricultural areas in the US. As a tax payer and citizen of Oregon, I oppose any legislation to increase the minimum wage and feel that it will hurt the economy and people of Oregon. The agriculture industry in Oregon and the availability of summer jobs for teens would suffer the most from this legislation.

I grew up in the 70's picking agricultural crops. As I grew older I was able to move from picking crops to general labor tasks at an agricultural research farm. After two summers on the farm, I was able to obtain a job working at a local grocery store, in which I was able to increase my hourly wage. As a result of courses that I took in high school, I was able to obtain an entry level job at my local bank during my senior year, thus again increasing my hourly wage. I quickly worked my way out of minimum wage by working hard, learning new skills and taking advantage of industry training programs. There are currently many entry level banking jobs in the area that will lead to increased success through industry training programs that are offered. Since I spent my career in the banking industry, I know that there are great training programs available throughout the industry to help employees quickly move beyond minimum wage paying jobs. Other industries offer training as well in order to build a more successful workforce.

- I feel that increasing the minimum wage will reduce opportunities for teenagers to obtain jobs that will provide them the training and experience to move into higher level jobs as adults. The opportunities I had to work as a teenager helped me to move beyond minimum wage paying jobs as an adult. Many businesses would fill their entry level jobs that have been traditionally filled by teenagers with adults that have experience.
- Increasing the minimum wage would result in employers looking at ways to reduce their labor cost, which is one of the largest costs incurred by businesses. Technology is becoming more available and will become more cost effective for businesses in comparison to hiring people to do the work. Many farmers with crops that require picking are looking at new technology that will allow them to reduce the amount of employees required for harvest.
- Businesses will increase wages based on their ability to attract the best employees however they shouldn't be forced to pay a minimum wage that could jeopardize their ability to remain in business. Many businesses have already increased wages as identified in a recent study stating that only 16% of employers in Oregon are paying less than \$15 per hour. Businesses that employ teenagers and those with no experience shouldn't be forced to pay a wage that is higher than the Federal minimum rate. That tells me that employers are choosing whether or not they need to pay \$15 or more to attract the workers they feel will be the best fit for their business. Businesses want to pay their workers a fair wage in order to attract and retain the best workforce possible. However they shouldn't be forced to pay a minimum wage that is inconsistent with Federal minimum wage requirements.

Please consider this testimony as you work through the bills that currently affect the minimum wage in Oregon.

Thank you

Tracy Duerst

Oregon Women for Agriculture

Executive Committee Member/Treasurer