

April 13, 2015

To: Senate Workforce Committee  
From: Ashley Bardales  
Re: Support of SB 610

Dear Chair Dembrow and Committee Members,

Good evening, My name is Ashley Bardales. Chair Dembrow and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to speak today. I am a single mother to two children, Abel and Rachel. I have 11 years of experience in the service industry. I have never made more than a dollar over minimum wage, despite my attempts to move up in a company. Over the last 11 years, I have attempted higher education seven different times. Each attempt was crushed by the necessity to work more hours to afford bills. My children and I currently live with my parents. I'm attending school for cosmetology. This would seem to be an excellent way out of poverty wages. Unfortunately, after two years of schooling, I will likely have to work as a licensed cosmetologist earning minimum wage.

My story is not uncommon, but that doesn't make it ok. Many Oregonians, like myself, are trying to provide for a family. People say we need to work hard to get out of poverty wages. I will ask you this. If everyone of us gets a degree and moves out of the service industry, who will make your coffee? Who will ring up your purchases at the grocery store? Who will serve you when you enjoy a meal out with your family? Who will cut your hair? Whether you're stopping in for a cup of coffee or getting gas in your vehicle, you make purchases daily. Service workers help society one lunch, coffee, full tank and gallon of milk at a time. Why are we, valuable members of society, expected to suffer in poverty, despite working hard and playing by the rules? No Oregonian should be working 40 hours a week, and not afford to pay the rent.

With 10% of our population earning minimum wage, neglecting this bill, is neglecting the people. The committee has an opportunity to make a ripple effect on our economy right now by giving the bottom tier wage earners a lift. A society is only as strong as their weakest

I've been asked what \$15 an hour would mean to my children and I. It would mean that I could be self-sufficient. I wouldn't need food stamps to provide food for myself and my children. 15 dollars would bring me to afford an apartment for us to live on our own. I would be independently able to provide for my children. It's the difference between paying the rent and an eviction notice. Even at almost \$10 an hour, I was 120 pounds because I chose to feed my children over myself. I couldn't afford to feed myself as well as my children. The first three years of my daughters life I saw her only a few hours a week as I tried to work enough to keep us afloat. 15 dollars would mean being able to raise my children myself, to be healthy and fed, and just able to thrive a little bit. I don't need cable or internet. I don't own a vehicle, and I'm okay with that. But I would like to enjoy life with my children, work to live, not live to work. \$15 an hour means actually being able to live. Chair Holvey and members of the committee: You can do something to prevent stories like mine from being possible in our great state. Please act swiftly to pass a minimum wage increase for me, my children and thousands of struggling families just like mine across the state who can't afford to wait.