

April 13, 2015

To: Senate Workforce and House Business and Labor Committees
From: Christine Kopp, home care worker
Re: Support of SB 610 and HB 2009

Dear Chairs Dembrow and Holvey and Committee Members,

My name is Christine Kopp from Portland, Oregon and I have been a home care worker for the last 19 years. I am currently working for a private agency in the Portland Metro Area, helping people who have been disabled since birth or a young age. My work is very important to me because I am able to help people to have a better life.

I work a 48 hour shift over the weekend. My current client is so energetic that he needs to get out of the house regardless of the weather. The list of duties that I am assigned to do for my clients is pretty extensive, leaving me exhausted at the end of my shift. I work 48 hours in two days, but I only get paid for 36 hours due to the 2-6 hours per day that my agency deducts as sleep time. On many occasions we need to work during the sleep time because our clients need us. My husband is also a home care worker for the same agency and is in the same situation, along with thousands of other home care workers around the state.

My current wage of \$10.50 is not enough. I would like to be able to afford to buy a car, which would allow me to work day shifts during the week. These shifts are only available to workers who own a car. As a result of my low wage I am forced to work weekends because I can't afford a car.

Another result of low wages for home care workers, is that there is always an issue of staff shortages. It is very difficult to find workers to cover shifts for vacations and other leave time for myself and others. I have been working at least one extra shift most weeks to help cover for staff shortages. My agency encourages all the employees to work extra hours but doesn't pay an overtime rate until after we work 50 hours during one week.

I can proudly say that many of the clients we serve have vocational hours which allow them to get out in the community for interesting things to do and get some funding for their own financial needs. My work makes it possible for them to be included in the community and it should be properly rewarded according to the positive impact that I and other home care workers have in the lives of our clients.

I am an outstanding home care worker, who along with thousands of equally qualified and experienced home care workers, face a dilemma of choosing between staying in a stable job with no benefits and low wages, or changing career paths leaving behind several years of professional experience.

A \$15 minimum wage will open other possibilities for my work schedule because I could afford a car. My husband and I both do home care work and with a \$15 wage my husband and I will be able to save money to have a decent retirement and enjoy life after all the years that we have worked. For all these reasons, I ask you to raise the minimum wage to \$15 to help all Oregon workers to have a decent life and the chance for the retirement we deserve.

Sincerely,

Christine Kopp