



Deborah Kafoury Multnomah County Chair

501 SE Hawthorne Blvd., Suite 600
Portland, Oregon 97214
Phone: (503) 988-3308
Email: mult.chair@multco.us

April 13, 2015

Chair Dembrow and members of the House Business and Labor Committee:

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 610 and House Bill 2009, to raise the state's minimum wage to \$15 an hour.

Multnomah County was the first County and largest public employer in Oregon to raise our employees' minimum wage to \$15. With income inequality at an all time high, it is time for Oregon lawmakers to take action.

Earlier this month a father and his seven kids died in their home from carbon monoxide poisoning. The man had been heating their house with a generator because they could not afford their heat bill even though he had a full-time job.

Working families are falling behind as wages fail to keep up with the cost of living.

Raising the minimum wage will help families. But it will also help businesses. If a family can't pay their electric bill, they will not be spending money at local businesses.

Raising the minimum wage to \$15 would benefit about 589,000 workers in Oregon. It would increase worker productivity and sales, according to a report by The Oregon Center for Public Policy (OCCPP). A higher minimum wage puts more money in the pockets of low-wage workers, who then spend those dollars at their local shops. The increased sales from those customers offset increased labor costs.

OCCPP studied small business growth trends over a six year period, and found the total number of small businesses grew faster in states where the minimum wage was above the federal minimum than in states where the federal minimum wage prevailed.

Family stability policies such as living wage pay, allow counties to free up resources to take care of our most vulnerable. We are responsible for providing the safety net for hungry children, the elderly, people suffering from mental illness, and people who do not have access to health care. If someone in Multnomah County is working full time, they should be able to keep a roof over their head and food on their plate.

I encourage you to pass a statewide living wage minimum so that all Oregon families are able to achieve stability and have the ability to contribute to our local economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deborah Kafoury". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

Deborah Kafoury

Chair