

April 13, 2015

To: House Business and Labor Committee
From: Erin Zygaitis
Re: Support of HB 2009

Dear Chair Holvey and Committee Members,

My name is Erin Zygaitis. I am a single mother and a full-time worker at a floral shop in Eugene. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about this important issue.

I graduated from the University of Oregon with a bachelor's degree in 2003. A couple years later I began working in the floral industry. Over the last 10 years I worked my way up and now manage a floral shop. I have all the responsibilities typical of a manager including hiring, ordering, maintaining inventory levels, scheduling, and meeting sales goals. I'm very good at my job and my floral designs have graced events at the University of Oregon, U of O Athletics, the Hult Center, political events, press conferences, and countless weddings.

However, even though I have all these years of experience and I'm a manager with a lot of responsibility, I am still only paid \$12 an hour. I was paid more at my college job than I am paid now, after a decade in the field.

I am a single mother raising a child not yet in school. Child care is so expensive, I often feel like I'm working just to pay the babysitter. Even though I have a steady job, financial insecurity is something I live with constantly. \$12 is simply not enough to cover the basics when you have a child. Rent, food, child care, clothing, transportation, medical expenses – these costs keep going up, but wages do not. Any unexpected bill can throw my budget into a tailspin.

Like any parent, I have dreams for my child. I want to be able to offer her opportunities. I want her to go to college. Right now I'm not sure how I will be able to provide this kind of financial support.

So many people are like me – working hard, year after year, but still not making enough money to support our families. A raise in the minimum wage could go a long way toward alleviating the fear we feel on a daily basis. I urge you to do what is right for the people of Oregon and raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, a level that is actually a living wage.

Thank you.