

Joint Senate Workforce and House Business and Labor Committees
Minimum Wage Hearing, Apr. 13, 2015, Hearing Rm F
Re: **SB 332 and HB 2956**

Chairs Dembrow and Holvey and members of the committee, I am **Jamie Partridge**, with 15 NOW pdx, Portland Jobs with Justice, and the Oregon State Association of Letter Carriers. We support a \$15 minimum wage for all Oregonians and urge you not to kill SB 610 and HB 2009. We also ask that you vote out SB 332 and HB 2956, bills that would allow cities and counties to raise their minimum wage above that of the state.

In 2001, the Oregon State Legislature, at the behest of the restaurant lobby (using model legislation crafted by the corporate-run American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC)), passed Oregon Revised Statutes § 653.017 which preempted cities from raising the minimum wage because of "the fear of a patchwork nightmare of local wage laws." In other words, the restaurant lobby sees local democracy as bad for business. This is particularly disturbing in Oregon, which was the first state to enshrine home-rule authority into the state constitution and trust cities and counties to make the right call on issues of local importance.

Ending the minimum wage preemption is right and important because ORS § 653.017 is anti-democratic, against the spirit of our home-rule state constitution. Cities must have the tools to maintain wage equity.

In Portland we have a rising cost of living, due primarily to our soaring housing costs, where even a \$15 per hour minimum wage is not enough to lift a worker out of poverty. Zillow, the real estate research firm, estimated last December that, with the median \$1,542 per month Portland rent, a 40 hour per week worker would need to make \$31 per hour to pay the nationally recognized 30% of income toward housing.

Research from the National Association of Realtors (NAR) has found that skyrocketing rent costs are far outpacing wage growth. Between 2009 and 2014, Portland rents have increased 20.45 percent, the 6th highest increase in the nation.

SB 332 and HB 2956 are sponsored by 18 legislators, many of you on these committees. Please vote out these bills to lift the preemption which prohibits cities from raising their minimum wage above that of the state.