

Senate Workforce and House Business and Labor Committees
Testimony in Support of SB 610 and HB 2009
April 13, 2015

Chairs and members of the committees:

My name is Lesly Munoz and I live in Woodburn. In 2005, my future husband and his mother owned a small restaurant. I was asked to help as a waitress on weekends, so I began helping out. My fiancé and I got married in 2006. I left my full time position as a charter communications worker and started working at the restaurant full time. While I was there I created and printed menus, was responsible for accounts payable/receivable, waited tables, cashiered, made tamales, facilitated cooking classes, bought food/supplies, and anything else that was needed. We worked hard and long hours along with other family members and employees. Because this group of people was new to me, all of those workers became like a second family to me. We made a good team and soon business was booming. We were able to make some important local business connections that helped out sales a lot. We were able to build meaningful community relationships which also grew our business. By the end of 2006 we were making almost 6 times what the restaurant was making in 2005. I truly felt like our success was a team effort.

At the end of the year in 2006, I suggested that we give our workers raises being that we were doing so well. My mother in law did not agree. She said that I didn't know anything about business. However, I felt it was unfair that all of the profits were going to my mother in law and her entertainment when some of our workers needed the money for survival. I feel that when a group of people make a business successful they should all enjoy the benefits. I do understand that when these folks were hired they were informed that their particular job was paid minimum wage. However, when they started it was also a lot slower. Some of those workers had been there since the restaurant opened in 2003 and were excellent employees.

It became clear to me that when business owners are given a minimum wage, they confuse that with a fair wage. Things were not fair at our restaurant. The workers who worked alongside us, just as hard, were not enjoying the same benefits as the family members that worked with us. Family members were regularly invited out to breakfast on Sunday's and also to dinner on Friday nights along with their families. My mother in law showered these folks with gifts for them and their children. Also, they took a lot of the food that was left over home since we cooked from scratch on a daily basis. One person was also given cash on the side. But the other workers did not get that special treatment, and I also was not paid for my work. I probably got 6 months of payment for about two years of work. In addition to this, I had to give my mother in law half of my tips. I literally had to be kind to her in order to pay my bills. She was in total control of my livelihood.

I believe that all workers deserve a living wage. We can't count on the goodness of people's hearts because even the most nurturing of mothers can get greedy and not share.