

April 13, 2015

To: Senate Workforce and House Business and Labor Committees  
From: Paula Likes, Homecare Worker  
Re: Support of SB 610 and HB 2009

Dear Chairs Dembrow and Holvey and Committee Members,

My name is Paula Likes from Portland, Oregon, and I currently work as a Home Care worker for a private agency in the Portland Metro Area, helping seniors maintain a fulfilling independent life in their homes. My work is something that is deeply important to me and is something that I have done for over 15 years. Many of my days begin at 5 am, preparing to head to work and make sure that I can catch the bus on time. The care that I provide includes help with the personal hygiene of my clients, baths, shower assistance, oral hygiene, dressing, and undressing, in addition to, toileting my clients depending their needs. I also do home management for them such as grocery shopping, housekeeping, laundry, changing linens, making beds, medication reminders, and basically clean their houses, plus cook their meals, and provide pet care such as feeding and cleaning after their animals. All of these duties are vital to helping my clients live with dignity in their own homes.

Even though I have enough duties for four different workers, I only get paid barely over the minimum wage. What's more, there are times when I work double shifts because there is a great need from the seniors in my care. In addition to work, I study at an online school from the time I get off work to 1 or 3 in the morning. I only sleep between 2-6 hours a day. I start running from the time I wake up to the time I go to bed. I am a devoted caregiver and my neighbors and family ask for my assistance when they need a trusted caregiver.

I work very hard to earn my paycheck, but the \$10 dollars an hour I earn does not go far enough to cover my groceries and bills. I am in survivor mode and it has become the norm that my roommates and I pool all our resources to make sure that there are groceries in the fridge. There are many times that we are scheduling and moving dates on when to pay the bills, because what we get paid barely gets us by. I wish that I could say that this was something that we have only done a few a times, but I unfortunately have had to borrow money from other friends and family just to make ends meet. What's more, I go to two different food banks once a month to have enough food for the month. Because I work so many hours during the day to be able to pay my bills and groceries, I don't have time to do basic chores for myself such as grocery shopping, laundry or bills.

I make a little over the minimum wage and can barely get me by, how is it for folks in our state that make the bare minimum wage? I ask that this committee increase the minimum wage to \$15 for the people of this state. I provide great care that seniors need and I work full time, I should be able to pay my bills. A \$15 minimum wage would allow me to get out of survivor mode and stop depending on food banks. "Letting me live my life as a human being again."

Sincerely,

Paula Likes