



Partners *for a*
Hunger-Free Oregon

Ending hunger before it begins.

To: Senate Committee on Workforce and General Government
From: Patti Whitney-Wise, Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
Subject: SB 1532, as amended
Date: February 2, 2016

We want to create an Oregon that is healthy, hunger-free and thriving. When more Oregonians have access to family-wage jobs, our economy, kids and communities win.

It's time to advance economic opportunity and honor the dignity of work by increasing Oregon's minimum wage.

Families engaged in full time work shouldn't be in poverty. Yet a full-time worker at minimum wage earns just \$19,240 per year – that's just 79 percent of the poverty line for a family of four. That simply isn't enough to meet life's basic needs.

So it's no wonder that nearly one in seven Oregonians reported that there had been times in the past 12 months when they did not have enough money to buy food.

Let's be clear: the majority of Oregon households that experience hunger are in the labor force. Fully two-thirds of households led by single moms who report hunger are in the labor force. This is the face of hunger: a mom coming home from a long day of low-wage work, skipping meals so her kids can eat.

We can change this. We urge the legislature to raise the minimum wage as proposed by the Governor. While we would like preemption lifted to restore the power of cities and towns to set higher wages, we realize that this proposal has the best chance of passing so that families will see some relief as early as this July.

More family-wage jobs means that more Oregonians will have sufficient purchasing power so that they'll have less need to turn to safety net programs to make ends meet.

And when the wage is raised, no one should be left out, such as farmworkers or tipped workers.

A higher minimum wage helps make that a reality. It's good for workers, their families, and for businesses that need customers with cash in their pockets.

Let's raise the wage. Together, we'll create a stronger Oregon for everyone.