



Children First for Oregon

Speaking Up for Kids Since 1991

2 February 2016

Senator Michael Dembrow, Chair
Members of the Senate Workforce and General Government Committee
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chair Dembrow and Senators,

Children First for Oregon advocates for long-term, systemic change by advocating for policies that keep children healthy and strengthen families. Raising Oregon's minimum wage is critically important to the children of parents working at or near these wages. One parent working full-time at minimum wage still leaves a family of three in poverty. This means the government must subsidize their employer, paying for food stamps and other income supports so the child can grow up in a home with adequate nutrition, shelter, and healthcare. Many American workers are paid so little, in fact, that the federal and state government spends \$1.7 billion in taxpayer money each year on these supports.

Our economic trends are not in favor of these working families and the statistics lay bare the problems that too many children face. Since 2007, median rent has gone up 9% while median family income have dropped 7%. Oregon has the third-highest rate of mothers with young children working in low-wage jobs at 26%. *Despite job growth, the child poverty rate has increased by more than 25% since before the recession, and by more than 10% when compared to 2009.*

Raising the minimum wage will allow parents the dignity of being able to meet their child's basic needs through their work. We ask that working parents model the value of work for our next generation of Oregon's workforce.

Additionally, you have, or soon will have, a copy of the 2016 Children's Agenda produced by United for Kids. United for Kids participants share a commitment to public policy changes and shared investments that benefit the health, safety, economic security, and education of Oregon's children. 14 organizations belonging to United for Kids support a \$13.50 minimum wage. The -1 amendment, matching the Governor's latest proposal, nearly achieves that goal in six years. We feel this compromise will make a significant difference to Oregon's children, making their lives better.

We ask you to join Children First in supporting the -1 for SB 1532 and help Oregon's low wage working parents lift their children out of poverty.

Sincerely,

Tonia Hunt
Executive Director