

February 2, 2016

Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Thatcher and members of the Committee,

My name is John Calhoun and I am a resident of Portland. I am here today on behalf of the Oregon Center for Christian Voices (OCCV) and speaking in favor of SB 1532

We believe Scripture is clear that one of God's intended roles for government is to ensure that poor and marginalized people are cared for. **Proverbs 3:27** says, "Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act."

Across our state, we are facing a moral and economic challenge. Members of our community—our neighbors, our relatives, our congregants—are working full-time jobs, but still earning so little that they struggle just to put food on the table and care for their families.

Those in our community earning minimum wage are caring for the elderly, serving us meals, and keeping our buildings clean. And after they've put in a full day at their jobs, they're being forced to choose between paying the rent or buying groceries. That is why demand at food banks is still at an all-time high in spite of the dramatic drop in unemployment over the past several years. We can't expect families to survive on \$9.25 an hour. It's time to raise the minimum wage.

As we have these discussions, it is also important to acknowledge the reality that Oregon's rural and urban economies are not the same. The cost of supporting a family in Portland is not the same in all parts of Oregon. And frankly there are some local economies that do not have the wealth that others do to pay the same wage level. That is why we are supportive of the approach taken by the Governor although there may be other options that you should consider. I have sympathy for you legislators who are trying to figure out the right formula and level.

It is the church's role to be the conscience of our society, and to remind our political leaders that they have a moral obligation to care for their communities. We believe that if someone is working full time, they ought to be able to afford food, shelter, and healthcare for themselves and their families while living a life of dignity and respect. To do that today for all Oregonians requires an increase in the minimum wage.