



February 2, 2016

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

Chair Dembrow and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Professional and Technical Employees Local 17, I write today to support efforts of the Legislature to increase the minimum wage in Oregon in Senate Bill 1532. Amongst our 8,500 members, we represent approximately 800 employees of the City of Portland. While all of our Portland members are fortunate enough to earn well above the minimum wage, they understand the impacts of a lower-than-living wage on the communities in which they live and provide public services.

PTE Local 17 was closely involved in the efforts to increase the minimum wage in the City of Seattle, where we represent several thousand employees of both the City and King County who provide direct services to workers who work full time and yet were still in poverty. We hope that the members of this committee will pay close attention to the impacts of the minimum wage increase within Seattle, where wages have already increased significantly to their second tier on the march towards \$15 in 2018 for large employers and 2021 for small employers. We would note specifically that alarming concerns about business closure and economic collapse have not come to pass during the first year of implementation in Seattle, and we expect a continued smooth ramp up to a livable minimum wage.

We believe that it is both unjust and economically detrimental for people who work full-time to live in poverty. Our members have seen firsthand the impact that poverty-level wages have had, both on the health of their communities and on the budgets of public sector programs that are stretched by the need to provide services for an ever increasing population of low-wage workers. The labor movement has long held as a core principle that hard work should be rewarded with fair pay. Today, we respectfully ask that you join us in renewing the promise that all working Oregonians can support their families and make a better life for themselves.

Sincerely,

Elliot Levin  
Research Director and Legislative Advocate  
Professional and Technical Employees Local 17

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