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From the desk of
Rep. Jessica Vega Pederson

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**Christopher, East Portland
House District 47
Security Officer**

My name is Christopher, and I work full time as a Security Officer. I've been at this job nearly 10 years, and I still only get paid \$10.10 an hour. Before we unionized at my job, we hadn't gotten a raise in six years. Now we get a 30-cent raise every year until our contract expires and we have to renegotiate.

I am the only one in my household that works, my girlfriend is on Social Security and food stamps. We don't have any children. Our rent is \$830 a month, which is hard for me to afford on my own, so we have a roommate. Sometimes I work overtime to make more money to cover our rent. It seems like even with my pay increases, our rent goes up anyway so it doesn't really make a difference.

I gross a little less than \$1,200 a month. When you take out rent, my phone bill, my electricity bill, my monthly insurance cost, and the cost of a transit pass, there isn't much left to live on. I definitely can't afford a car, which is why I take the bus to and from work. It takes about 30 minutes, but I usually leave early so I can run errands on the way. On the weekends I work, my commute almost doubles because of the bus schedule.

If I got a raise, I'd help my girlfriend pay off her car so we wouldn't have that bill and I'd have a car to use. I'd try to find a rent-to-own home so we could live on our own. I'd save for a vacation for the two of us. The last time I went anywhere was home to Everett, WA to visit my Aunt, who I hadn't seen in 15 years at the time. My real dream would be to take a vacation to Disneyland someday.

There's a lot of people out there who make even less than I do. I'd challenge anybody who doesn't think we deserve a raise to live on our wages for a week, and see what happens.