

Sent from my iPhone

On May 4, 2021, at 5:29 PM, John Chavez <documaxllc@comcast.net> wrote:

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I am a manager at a popular fast casual restaurant. I have scraped by on low wages for several years to get to where I am now. I am currently making the most I've ever made in my life at \$17.50 an hour.

This wage is a luxury in my industry, but despite this luxury, it disqualifies me from Medicaid, and yet I still make too little to afford the over \$5000 deductible and monthly payments required for a basic health insurance plan on the exchange. The market place plans I am able to afford are essentially useless. At this rate I am spending my hard earned money to have health insurance on paper. I would rather have that money in my pocket than to make \$200 monthly payments for a \$1000 maximum payout.

This is a common refrain among restaurant workers. Health insurance is out of reach for us and many Oregonians. We are lauded as one of the best food and beer cities in the US, but despite all the revenue we bring in for the state, restaurant workers see little to no compensation reflected in our wages or our quality of life. We work long hours for little pay and zero benefits, and yet we help to make this city special. We are one of the main reasons Portland is so desirable to visit and live in, and yet we are among those who are forgotten and mistreated in the name of revenue. We are also an industry fraught with mental illness and addiction, but are left with few to no options for help.

As a state that is proud of its natural beauty, wine, beer, and food, Oregon needs to start taking care of the workers who make the tourist industry possible. Affordable health care for all would not only improve the lives of all Oregonians, but give much needed support and service to those who provide, and have struggled to provide, everyone with food and a sense of comfort and normalcy during the pandemic. We are essential and frontline workers and we must be compensated for our labor.