

Joint Senate Workforce and House Business and Labor Committees

Minimum Wage Hearing, Apr. 13, 2015, Hearing Rm F

Re: **SB 610, HB 2009**

By Alaina Reilly

I am in support of \$15.00 NOW. For those who have been fortunate enough to have life work out for them where they have their health & enough income they do not grasp the depth or the breath of the struggle endured by those who do not. Not everyone who struggles financially have done anything to "deserve" it. My husband & I both have graduated from college. We never got drunk, never partied, never did street drugs nor did we abuse any prescribed drugs. We did not have any addictions nor did we gamble. We did as we were raised to do by our families & society. We went to college, we showed up at our jobs, sought extra hours, tried to be responsible. But "LIFE" happened. Accidents, illnesses, Trauma, divorces, job losses & other such unexpected, unforeseen situations happened. And there are only so many things one can overcome. Beautiful, skilled, gifted, talented, intelligent educated people can end up losing every safety, every security can be lost, stripped away from you in an instant. Time & again.

From the outside, as a spectator it can look like we have done things to deserve it and we caused ALL of our own problems or that we are refusing to do what is needed in order to be financially successful. It is too easy to overlook other factors that are involved. One such factor is too low a minimum wage. The current hourly wage is not enough to allow anyone, even a couple without children to do much more than barely squeak by. It often comes down to whether to eat or to pay rent & utilities.

Our own situation is that we both ended up on Disability. We do NOT make much on this. Most sources of help decide on our Gross income, not our Net income & we are then not qualified to receive most help. We live in a complex that stretches our budget and while they are improving it will now make it near impossible to stay in another year. We will again have to look for housing in a less savory & less safe place to live in.

Going off Disability isn't really a choice unless minimum wage is raised to a decent hourly amount such as \$15.00/hour.

We are always only 1 Generation away from losing our independence. From losing our youth & thereby our Nation to become in bondage to others who will exploit our mistakes against our cities & our Nation. Well, I forgot what word or phrase he used but go with me here and see if you can word it to express the concept to those you need to convince to your position. It is actually more than a concept-it is a practical reason for the powers that be to make a connection & hopefully have an epiphany as to why they need to care & raise minimum wage.

We the people & our youth are our greatest commodity into remaining a powerful nation. But when we designate ourselves to a mentality of poverty, denying them hopes, dreams, opportunity to have

individual & national pride, then we will be a generation of becoming dominated by & subservient to another nation more able to take advantage of us. In order to remain a Power Nation, we cannot break our own people by keeping them so poor they lose that kind of self respect & ambition to say with pride that we are too good, too intelligent a people to end up being under another country. Financial poverty leads to all other types of poverty & bondage. It leads to denied opportunity, denied medical help, denied self improvements, to self shame, brokenness, loss of self respect & pride.

What poverty & a poverty mentality or life style is as follows: It is children, men, women who have self esteem that is shredded and destroyed. They have lost & failed before reaching the starting gate. Poverty attacks from both on the outside & from within. It is brokenness in one's core identity. It is the loss of dreams and of personal celebration. In reality it prevents whole families & societies from becoming all they can be on an individual level. It often equates to our position in family or social structures. Poverty influences & impacts how others see us or treat us. And how we treat ourselves and our closest family members.

Here is where money factors in. Having money DOES expand our freedoms & our opportunities. Very few of us are natural forces of nature that can overcome everything & transform everything into a positive. Having money does help get medical help so that we don't have to lose our children or spouses or relatives or friends before their time. It means they don't have to suffer. Money means more people can learn to dream, reach out towards their goals, to grow, stretch, become more intelligent, increase our talents. Money can increase influence or control over us, others, society. YES all these things can be done against all odds, but that is luck.

It is silly, insulting, offensive and wrong to apply your own experience of internal contentment and success to draw conclusions about how the B I L L I O N S who suffer every conceivable possible indignity & crushing hardship that lack in money or anything brings with it, should live. You want us to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps when the boot on our necks are being worn by our most wealthy, making their wealth from us, and they are the monster, the beast which imprisons, shames, cuckolds, degrades, beats down & breaks even one person, let alone societies of people. It keeps the masses from becoming strong, developed individuals who can lift their eyes up & give them leverage & self esteem over those who have money, power & who abuse it over the rest of us.

It can ONLY benefit you, Salem, Oregon, America to & our future position as a free & strong Nation to give its citizens a wage that gives us a fighting chance at this goal.

Pass \$15.00 Now so we can help our people.

Thank you,
Alaina Reilly
Salem