

I am writing you as a native Oregonian, registered voter and a small business owner and am in opposition to the Governor's Minimum Wage Proposal (SB 1532).

For the past 15 years I have owned and operated a landscape company. My company currently maintains commercial landscapes for over 500 small, medium and large businesses. I do this with a full-time staff of 125, supplemented with 50 additional seasonal employees.

The recent proposal made by Governor Brown regarding increasing the state's minimum wage is very concerning. Currently, there seems to be a movement (particularly in Oregon) that our local businesses do not care for or provide appropriate compensation for their employees and that legislation is needed to correct this "abuse". While I value good employees and strive to compensate them appropriately, I believe this effort to "lead the nation" in raising the minimum wage will be bad for our economy and not solve the desire of providing living wages in a robust economy.

My company's starting wage is currently above minimum wage but not near the 14.00 – 15.00 proposed. Although my starting wage is below the current minimum wage proposed, I do have a graduated pay scale that rises up to over \$20.00 per hour for experienced staff. Our wages are based on skill and ability, which encourages employees to train and develop themselves. Most of our high wage earners started at or near our entry level wage. Through our encouragement and assistance, they develop and make merit based increases.

The best way to move people out of low wage jobs is to encourage them to get training, development and improve their skills. Forcing employers to pay more for entry level positions reduces the reward for those who are motivated. People stuck in low wage positions need to be encouraged to improve their skills. Is it the fault of businesses or the unskilled, unmotivated employees.

We value employees and help them "get ahead" and earn a "livable wage" but some responsibility needs to be put on the individual to improve themselves to earn better wages.

Maybe if our state really care about employees and living wages then, maybe we should be looking for policies that will encourage our economy in general. This would grow small businesses and these businesses would have to compete for employees by offering higher wages, better benefits, and flexible time off. A good "free market" economy is good for employees as they will find themselves with several great options for employment.

Mandating a significantly higher minimum wage is not the answer. I urge you to stand on the side of small business and don't get pulled into the "minimum wage" race. There is no winner.

Bob Grover