

To: House Business and Labor Committee
From: Anna Petrov, RDN
Re: Support of SB 1532A

Chair Holvey and Committee Members,

My name is Anna Petrov, I work as a Registered Dietician and I live in Beaverton. I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 1532-A.

A lot of the families I serve may have one or two parents working two jobs at minimum or just barely over minimum. Many have kids in Head Start programs and receive SNAP benefits, but it's important to remember that you have to have a very low income to qualify for either. Many parents are working multiple jobs to make ends meet. When a parent works two jobs, this undermines family time, can put children's safety and/or health at risk, and weakens opportunities for cognitive and social development due to little opportunity for communication between parents and children.

Also, when parents have to make hard choices, quality food is often one of the first things to be compromised. Fresh fruits and veggies and sufficient protein often cost too much and people/families will fill up on bread/carbs, sweets, junk, canned products, limiting meat and other protein foods, sometimes going without eating one or more meals per day. I see kids at Head Start that come to school and the first thing they look for is breakfast!

Poor nutrition, especially in children, also compromises physical and cognitive development, interferes with concentration in the classroom, limits energy for active play, and slows development of creativity and verbal skills. They may not do as well in school, may have problems with social interactions, and the physical and cognitive deficits can follow them into adulthood. The end result? Poorer skill sets resulting in fewer job opportunities for them, impaired productivity, another generation working for low incomes, which develops into a nasty, destructive downward cycle affecting the entire community.

Most low wage jobs in Oregon are not local businesses, but giant corporations. Fast food and retail businesses are enjoying record profits. They are hiring, but half of these so-called "recovery" jobs are low wage, most without benefits. Workers earning below the cost of living are not consumers. Many qualify for SNAP or other public assistance. Taxpayers picking up the tab, with an overall negative effect on local economies.

Most small and local business already pay more and historically have benefitted from increased wages for several reasons. When wages go up, they see reductions in absenteeism, less turnover, increased employee loyalty, and improved performance at work. In 2014, the states that increased their wages actually showed increases in job creation. When workers make more money, they become consumers, boosting the economy and supporting local business.

I urge members of the committee to raise the minimum wage to a level where families across the state of Oregon can earn enough to afford the basics - like healthy, well-balanced meals – and parents can afford to spend more time with their children.

Thank you,

Anna Petrov, RDN