

To: House Business and Labor Committee
From: Gladys Hernandez, Portland Airport
Re: Support of SB 1532A

Chair Holvey, members of the committee,

My name is Gladys Hernandez, and I work at the Portland Airport. I have worked there pushing wheelchairs for eight years, and continue to make minimum wage. My only raises have come from the annual inflation adjustments that the state makes.

The only way my husband and I even get close to paying for the bare necessities is by renting rooms in our house to strangers. Without that extra income, we would be on the streets ourselves. This month, we are paying 10 days late, because we only just got the money together.

My husband recently lost his job. With a single, minimum income and no benefits, we simply can't afford the basics in life. The mortgage always gets paid late, meaning those late fees, and the interest on them, keeps stacking up.

My employer recently started offering health insurance, but that money comes out of my paycheck. We still can't afford even the most basic of health plans for my husband though, meaning he can't afford to go to the doctor or have any kind of preventative care.

We choose to keep our stove running, the lights on, and the heat above freezing, instead of having the necessary care to catch a potentially life-threatening situation. These are the kinds of decisions I – and thousands of other just like me – have to make on a daily basis.

We have no savings for retirement. My husband – even though he should be retiring soon – is trying to find another job right now to help us pay the bills. If we retired right now, we wouldn't have enough to live on. So we will keep working until we can't anymore.

My husband and I – and the thousands of other Oregonians just like us – struggle everyday affording even the most basic needs. Shouldn't we rest easy knowing that we can afford a simple medical care without losing the ability to heat our house? Or that we could retire comfortably, and not into poverty?

I love my job, and take pride in the work that I do. But if I could find another job I would. The truth is I'm not young anymore, and finding another job isn't easy.

A four to five dollar per-hour increase in my wages would be life changing. It would mean peace of mind. It would mean not having to prioritize between health care and the mortgage.

I'm not asking for much. I am just asking to be able to continue to do the work I love, while getting fairly paid for it. So I can have a standard of living that would actually be considered living, because right now I feel like I'm barely surviving.

Thank you for your time,

Gladys Hernandez, Portland