



To: House Committee on Business and Labor
From: Kari Schuhknecht
Re: Support of SB 1532A
Date: February 15, 2016

Chair Holvey and members of the Committee,

Minimum wage is something I am personally very familiar with. I come from a family of high school drop outs and I am the first in my family to not only graduate high school but to attend college. I have been financially supporting myself since I was eighteen and have had to take time off from school to work to make ends meet.

Three years ago I had to do exactly that and was working full time for minimum wage at a local chocolate cafe. I did not have health insurance because I still could not afford it. In order to make rent I lived with four friends in a three-bedroom apartment. I couldn't afford a car, so I took public transportation everywhere. I was in my early twenties--a time when many come across the growing pains of wisdom teeth. I knew mine were coming in I just couldn't afford the insurance to care for it.

Dealing with the pain of them growing in went on for about six months and became a daily painful challenge. I couldn't sleep well at first, then I was struggling to eat and finally I could barely talk because of the pain. Finally, it got so bad one day that my boss sent me home. I had to go to an emergency dentist office that evening. \$500 later and two more missed shifts at work I had my first wisdom tooth removed. My sister put the cost onto her credit card and I slowly made payments out of the few tips I made at work until I paid her back over the next year and a half.

Because I couldn't afford the cost, I repeated this scenario two more separate times. I had to have three separate surgeries to remove my four wisdom teeth because I could not afford to simply do it in one go. I had my last two removed the spring of 2015. I know that if I had been paid a living wage I would have been able to afford to care for myself the first time instead of spacing out three surgeries over a three year period.

I am now a Junior in college still pursuing my degree and my dreams and the truth is I would already be there if I didn't have to continually take time off school to work full time to afford my life and my health.

Thank you.

Kari Schuhknecht, Portland