



February 15, 2016

Chair Holvey, committee members,

We are writing today to express our strong support for SB 1532, proposed legislation to raise Oregon's minimum wage. SB 1532 has clear benefits for Oregon, particularly women and the families who depend on them for both financial support and caregiving.

In Oregon, women make up nearly two-thirds of the minimum wage workforce, and two-thirds of Oregon women are breadwinners or co-breadwinners for their family. While the costs needed to raise and sustain a family have risen, wages for Oregon working families have not followed that same trajectory. This results in many workers—especially women—being stuck in poverty.

In 2014 in Oregon, one-third of women head of households earned less than the federal poverty level. The impact that such low wages have on Oregon families is tremendous. Low-wage working parents often work more hours to make ends meet, meaning they spend less time at home, creating more stress on their families and communities.

Even more alarming, forty-five percent of households headed by women *with children under five* in Oregon lived below the federal poverty line. **45 percent!** That is unacceptable, and that is one of the reasons we believe legislators must act now to raise the wage.

It's clear that we need to create an economy that works for all of Oregon's working women, as well as their families who so often depend on them for financial support (and, of course, caregiving). Raising the minimum wage will help reduce families' finance-related stress and contribute to greater personal and public health for Oregonians across the state. Specifically, lifting children out of poverty can have long-lasting effects that improve their health, their educational outcomes, and extend their lives, from healthier births to fewer chronic diseases.

Raising the wage *now*, during the 2016 "short" legislative session, is important to Oregon NOW and our 1,450 members across the state because **we believe that Oregon women have waited long enough for this raise.**

Thank you for the opportunity to share our strong support of this bill with you and your entire committee. We urge you to move this important proposal forward as soon as possible. Oregon women have waited long enough!

Sincerely,

Michelle Ganow-Jones, Executive Director
Kristin Teigen, President, Board of Directors
Oregon Chapter of the National Organization for Women