



February 15, 2016

To: House Business and Labor Committee
From: Jenna Borowski on behalf of YWCA of Greater Portland and Impact NW
Re: Support of SB 1532A

Chair Holvey and Committee Members,

My name is Jenna Borowski and I am here representing the YWCA of Greater Portland and Impact NW. Both agencies are members of the Fair Shot For All coalition and we also endorse the \$15 Now campaign. Collectively our missions amount to eliminating racism and poverty and empowering women and we support policies that will build an economy that gives every Oregonian an opportunity to get ahead. We serve more than ten thousand individuals annually.

Raising the minimum wage in Oregon is important to the YWCA and Impact NW because we know that a family cannot survive on just \$19,240 a year, which is what a full time worker earns per year at the current minimum wage. The majority of minimum wage workers are people of color and women, and many others are people who work full time yet cannot get ahead.

In Multnomah and Washington Counties, a single parent earning the minimum wage would need to work 79 hours a week to afford a two-bedroom apartment. Even in the most rural counties in Oregon, studies have shown that a single parent with one child who works full time would need to be making at least \$13.50 an hour to afford a two-bedroom apartment. This does not yet factor in the cost of food, gas and other necessities for a family, let alone childcare fees or savings for the future. Poverty is the single highest determinant of academic failure, child mortality, and incarceration. That being said, there is no more immediate solution to poverty than to make work pay and restore the dignity of hard work.

Senate Bill 1532 is a laudable first step in recognizing that no Oregon family, no matter where they live or what job they do, can survive on our present minimum wage. Raising the minimum wage to only \$12.50 an hour, however, is still not enough for a family to be self-sufficient, and waiting until 2022 to reach a \$15 minimum wage is inadequate for our neighbors, our relatives, and members of our community who are working full time yet struggling to put food on the table and facing an increase in the cost of living, and an affordable housing crisis.

On behalf of the YWCA of Greater Portland and Impact NW I urge members of the committee to raise Oregon's minimum wage to \$15 an hour now. There is no public policy that could more quickly reduce the number of people dependent upon inadequately funded government programs like TANF, utility assistance, food stamps, and subsidized housing. Raising the minimum wage is a more probable solution to closing the gap between housing supply and demand. We believe that work should pay and appreciate your support in improving the lives of over half a million Oregonian workers and their families.

Thank you.

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca

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