

Chairman Holvey and members of the Committee,

My name is Stefani Evers; I am a third-year college student, and a fifth generation dairy farmer from Washington County. I was lucky enough to grow up on my family's 400-head dairy farm, where I am proud to have acquired my work ethic and sense of responsibility. Delivering a healthy calf and watching it grow into a happy, healthy cow is a wonderful feeling like no other, and I wouldn't trade my childhood on the farm for the world.

My family and I ran the dairy ourselves, with the help of two to three hired helpers. All of the hired workers received minimum wage, with the opportunity for a raise after a certain amount of time. While dairying is a necessary and fulfilling way of life, it is typically not the most profitable. Paying a higher minimum wage would require small family farms just like mine to pay more than they are able. If a minimum wage increase were to occur, there is no doubt in my mind that most dairymen would continue on as long as they could, working themselves to the bone trying to keep their livelihood afloat. As you likely know, we are losing dairy farms at an alarming rate, and a raise in the minimum wage would lead to the sellout of even more dairies across the state.

Unfortunately, dairy farmers and their families would not be the only ones negatively impacted by a higher minimum wage. This last summer, I was given the opportunity to work on a baling crew for Bashaw Land & Seed, a grass seed farm based in Harrisburg. Although I had grown up driving tractors, working the dirt, and baling hay, this was a whole new world to me. I was able to learn more than I ever could have imagined, met some truly amazing people, and had so much fun while doing it. Yet, as my employer would later tell me, had the minimum wage been increased to \$12.00 (as was proposed during the previous legislative session), I never would have been hired. Had the wage increased, it would have been much more financially feasible for Bashaw Land & Seed, along with so many other farms, to hire experienced foreign laborers, limiting job opportunities in agriculture for young Oregonians, and keeping people like me from getting the experiences that we need.

Less than 2% of the U.S. population is directly involved in agriculture, please do not let that number sink any lower.

Sincerely,

Stefani Evers