

FROM THE DESK of Representative Susan McLain  
SB 1532  
Susan McLain

**Paula, Hillsboro**  
**House District 29**  
**Food Service Worker**

My name is Paula and I live in Hillsboro with my husband and our two kids, ages 6 and 7.

I work 35 hours a week preparing food at a café in Portland and I earn the minimum wage. I started working outside the home again about six months ago. Before, I cared for my younger child who was too small to attend school. I thought about getting a paid job, but then I'd have to pay for day care. My husband works full time earning a little more than the minimum if you count tips. Still, with both of us working, we don't make enough.

When I arrived in this country in 2005, I earned the minimum wage then, too, but cost of living wasn't as high and one could live a lot better. Today, we share our home with another family in order to afford rent. I used to go to Winco twice a month to buy food; now I can only afford to go once a month and I buy half of what I used to.

At work, we are working harder and harder because they hire fewer workers than they used to, but double the workload of each of us while paying us the same. I used to be able to spend time with my family; now I have to hire a baby sitter for longer and longer hours while I work. I don't have a car so I take public transportation from Hillsboro to Portland every day. It takes me 1.5 hours – sometimes more – each way. That's time I don't get to spend with my children. My husband bought a car at an auction to try to make our lives easier, but now we are spending money fixing it constantly.

My parents are getting older, they're unemployed, and I feel powerless because I can't help them financially. My credit cards are maxed out and the interest keeps going up.

I'd like to get a raise so I could spend more time with my kids; I could go to their school functions and their doctors' appointments. Maybe I could buy a better car – that would save me time going to and from work. I could pay off my credit cards and I could save the money I pay in interest, send some to my parents. I just wouldn't be so stressed due to debts.