



Joseph, 60, Portland
House District 43
Passenger Services Associate

My name is Joseph. I'm 60 years old, and I work at the airport doing passenger services and line coordinating. I've worked at the same company for five years, and I still only make minimum wage. We've never gotten a raise above the minimum the whole time I've worked there, and we've seen other benefits disappear, too. We used to get two weeks paid vacation, but they took that way. We are also supposed to get sick pay but they don't tell you that, you have to ask.

Every day I get up around 4:25am to get ready for work. I catch a bus at 5:45am to the MAX, and then I take the MAX to the airport. I usually get to work around 6:30am, so then I have about 25 minutes before my shift at 7:00am. I'd rather be early than late because I don't want to get written up, so I bring a book. I'm a very patient person so it doesn't bother me. At work, I push passengers to their gates in wheelchairs or pick them up at their gates. I also do line coordinating for first class, basically I stand at the line and make sure people don't try to skip the line if they aren't first class passengers. I get off work at 5:30pm, then catch the train home. I work four ten-hour shifts every week.

After working all week every week, after I pay my bills, I don't have much left over for anything else. I don't have a savings account, because there's nothing to save. I have to pay rent, for my cell phone, food, and I have some medical expenses. I also have to buy bus passes.

Nowhere in the country can I afford to live on minimum wage right now. You're working 40 hours a week and you're in poverty. I just don't understand why some people feel like the minimum wage the way it is, is enough.

If the minimum wage were increased, I'd probably save up and get a car. In the meantime, I could get a monthly bus pass without paying extra. It opens up a lot of things that you're just not able to do with the minimum wage. I would be able to get out of this situation I'm in, and have my own place.

When we increase the minimum wage, everybody is thinking, "It's going to go up." Well, things are going up and people are still making the minimum wage. We need to get out of this rut, get out of this mentality. I know I'm much more valuable than minimum wage.