



April 13, 2015

House Business & Labor Committee
Senate Workforce Committee

Re: Proposals to increase statewide minimum wage

Dear House Chair Holvey and Senate Chair Dembrow,

The Oregon City Chamber of Commerce represents 290 local businesses. We support maintaining Oregon's current minimum wage law which indexes the minimum wage each year based on inflation.

We ask that you stand with small businesses from all over Oregon and oppose efforts to increase Oregon's minimum wage further. Increases in the minimum wage would hurt local businesses, result in fewer businesses and jobs, and would not benefit our community.

The State of Oregon has demonstrated its commitment to ensuring fair employment opportunities for its citizens and has done so for years. In fact, Oregon's minimum wage (\$9.25/hr) is the second highest in the United States, only behind Washington (\$9.47/hr). Our minimum wage law is also set to increase annually with the CPI.

Fewer than 1 in 6 Oregon minimum wage earners are employed full time, according to Current Population Survey Data by US Census and US Department of Labor. I can think of numerous examples of students, both high school and college, whose busy schedules simply will not allow for full time employment. For many, part time employment is a choice that works for their schedule.

Oregon's historically high minimum wage has not yielded economic gains for Oregon workers. Since 2002 (when Oregon voters passed Measure 25 to increase minimum wage and index for inflation), Oregon's unemployment rate has consistently exceeded the federal unemployment rate. Despite having the second highest minimum wage rate in the US, our state's poverty rate now exceeds the US poverty rate. Perhaps there are more important issues to correct in Oregon than this, what could be a crippling increase in minimum wage.

While the Oregon City Chamber of Commerce is not a business by definition, we are still an employer as a 501(c)6 non-profit organization. Our volunteer leaders and staff are working hard to stabilize our organization's funding, especially as a result of the recession. We currently employ 2.5 FTE and all three employees earn above our state's current minimum wage and receive some minor benefits. At \$15/hr, our organization would be forced to reduce our employment to 2.0 FTE, thus reducing the service to our business community and yes, our customers. Being able to hire employees above minimum wage provides a competitive advantage at present. If there is a significant increase in minimum wage, our employees who must be skilled in software like QuickBooks and versed in public relations, will be paid no more than an unskilled individual working for the first time in fast food. Now, we charge you to use our example and determine what the exponential job loss will be for the citizens of the State of Oregon, should Oregon's minimum wage reach \$15 in 2018.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amber D. Holveck'.

Amber D. Holveck
Executive Director