

4/5/18
Elaine Stehel
S.40

To: House Committee on General, Housing and Military Affairs
From: Elaine Stehel
Re: Public Hearing on S.40, Relating to Increasing the Minimum Wage
Date: Thursday, April 5th 2018

My name is Elaine Stehel, and I live in Northfield, VT. We moved to Central VT in July 2017 due to a job relocation for my spouse. I hold two Bachelor of Arts degrees, one in French and one in Linguistics, as well as a TESOL Certificate for Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. According to my current resume, I've worked six various full and part-time jobs these past nine months.

Yet of these six jobs, only two have provided a starting wage over the current state minimum of \$10.50/hr., and one offered a starting salary equating to an hourly wage over the proposed minimum wage of \$15/hr.

I'd like to offer a brief overview of my basic monthly expenses, so that one may understand just how impossible it is to live well in Central Vermont making \$1,640/month (working forty hours a week at the current minimum wage of \$10.50/hr.)

Monthly rent & utilities -- \$1,300

I now have \$340 remaining for the month, if my spouse is unable to work. However, let's assume that my spouse works forty hours for \$10.50/hr. Then, gratefully, we have \$1,980 remaining after we pay rent and utility bills.

Monthly food expenses for 2 adults and 2 cats (cooking mostly at home, supporting local small businesses and farmers' markets, plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, plus healthy cat food for healthy adult cats with no current medical issues) -- \$500

We now have \$1,480 remaining for the month.

Monthly transportation expenses for 2 adults (gratefully the cats stay put) -- \$1,000

We now have \$480 remaining for the month.

Monthly healthcare expenses for 2 relatively healthy adults in their mid-thirties with no serious medical concerns or surgeries required -- \$200

We now have \$280 remaining for the month.

Monthly household expenses, such as cleaning supplies, clothing and personal items -- \$200

We now have \$80 remaining for the month.

This \$80 does not come even close to sufficiently enabling us to pay down our student loans, allow us to save for a home or retirement, or even allow us to hope, someday, that we might be able to afford to bring children into our family.

My spouse and I are actually working well over 80 hours a week between us, and yet we are making well under \$2,000 monthly combined. We are very grateful to have employee health care coverage, but the number of part-time positions we cobble together to attempt to make ends meet hinders our attempts to make a decent life for ourselves.

We're incredibly happy to be here in Central Vermont, and we plan to continue to do our best to make our lives work here. If the past nine months are any indication, however, of what we may have to be willing to do to live well here, it may be many years before we are able to purchase our own home, pay off our debts, and/or save for retirement, by which time we will both be quite physically unable to bear children, and quite possibly too exhausted to consider foster care or adoption.

Please, Raise The Wage.