

Samantha Ferrato of St. Johnsbury

I have been a cashier, server, office assistant, prep cook, head cook, and campaign worker over my career. At times, I've had 4 jobs at once; that was exhausting, to the point where nothing got done around the house or in my personal life. Work was all that I thought about. It had a very negative effect on my family.

Since then I've gone back to school and have one job. I end up on depending on my fiancée at times to pay bills on time and to help with groceries. This is a new experience for me. We always make it work and now have a new person coming into this world. As first time parents, we want to create a savings account for our child and save up for any urgent matters that may arise. This last part is very close to impossible, even with assistance from the state WIC program. Raising the minimum wage would allow me to become more independent and confident in being a mother and in our state of Vermont.

My experience is that working at a minimum wage job causes issues at work and home. There can be ill feelings and discontentment. I've watched a lot of parents struggle or work so hard that they forget the importance of spending time with their children or are too exhausted to do so. Psychological damage is hard to undo and that is what role money plays in many households due to stress.

What I want to say to you, legislators, is that this is not about me. This is about the lives I see on a daily basis trying to be tough and get through a day at work. Others choose not to deal with getting a job and figure out other means of living, like living off grid, not knowing if they'll be able to make it through the winter.

But as for me, if I were paid a living wage I'd be much less exhausted from the stress caused by the question, "Can I pay for