

Submitted Testimony

Joint Legislative Public Budget Hearing

Workforce Development

February 3, 2016

Tamara Elzubair, Schenectady, New York

Good afternoon members of the Assembly and Senate. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to tell you why I support the Governor's budget proposal to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour.

My name is Tamara Elzubair. I am the mother of 3 daughters, and I have 3 granddaughters and 1 grandson. Right now, out of necessity I live in Schenectady with my oldest and youngest daughters and also, my 3 granddaughters. We help each other.

My oldest daughter used to work in the healthcare industry, but due to a disability, she is no longer able to work. I do the best I can to help her financially. Raising 3 daughters like she is doing is not easy – I know that because I had to do it too. We are all very proud of my youngest daughter, the only one of us to have completed college. However, at the moment, she cannot find a job in her field. With college loans to pay, she is living with us.

In order to take care of my family, I work 2 jobs. For years, I have been working as a C.N.A. (certified nursing assistant) at Albany County Nursing Home. My hourly wage is just above \$13 and it doesn't pay all the bills we have, so I also have to work as a private duty aide, when I'm not working at the nursing home. Ironically, I have to work so many hours to pay our bills, that I actually have less and less time to spend with the family, even though we live together.

I support a minimum wage increase to \$15 an hour. To me personally, it would mean that I could work fewer hours. I could help my daughter by paying more of her students loans. I might have extra money to buy my grandchildren some things they want---not only the clothes they need to go to school. Doesn't every hard working person and their family deserve that? I don't want my grandchildren to struggle the way it has been for me. I think the least we can do is leave a better and more just world for our children.

No one who works 2 jobs like I do – no one who works any full-time job should have to struggle the way we do. We all try hard and deserve a decent life. Please do the right thing and increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour for all working people. And in particular, for all of us healthcare workers, please make sure that the Medicaid budget is properly funded, so that we will be able to make enough money so we can take care of our families at the same time we take care of others.

Thank you.

Tamara Elzubair

518.836.6496