

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 14, 2016

Statement on Gov. Kate Brown's Minimum Wage Proposal

PORTLAND, Ore. – The business representatives of the Governor's work group on minimum wage believe the Governor's proposal is a missed opportunity to move forward with a plan that works for all of Oregon. However, we remain hopeful a minimum wage that will work for both rural and urban Oregon can be salvaged in the Legislature.

For two months, at the governor's request, employers came to the table in a sincere effort to negotiate a reasonable minimum wage increase that would be passed by the Oregon Legislature in February, and result in the withdrawal of potential ballot measures in November 2016.

From the beginning, we had principles we thought should be incorporated in any minimum wage increase:

- It must work for all of Oregon;
- It should phase in on a reasonable schedule that protects against potential job losses;
- It should ensure minimum wage policy continues to be set at the state, not local, level; and
- It should include an opportunity for training programs for youth and other populations starting in their careers.

The plan Governor Brown announced today does not adequately incorporate these principles.

Throughout our discussions, we offered several options to raise the wage statewide, and we expressed a willingness to accept a higher rate in the Portland area recognizing the additional costs of living in an urban area. Our proposals would have given Oregon one of the highest minimum wages in the country, if not the highest. While we were prepared to accept a phased-in increase, the plan proposed by the Governor, in our view, creates too large a divide between Portland and the rest of Oregon. It ignores the need for a gateway wage for teenagers and first time workers, unduly burdens small business and puts Oregon farmers and other traded-sector employers at an extreme competitive disadvantage in the worldwide marketplaces.

We look forward to working with legislators to express our concerns and continue our efforts to build a minimum wage plan that will work for all of Oregon.

Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce
Northwest Grocery Association
Oregon Business Association
Oregon Health Care Association
Oregon Association of Nurseries
Portland Business Alliance

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