

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 15, 2015

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We applaud your recent executive orders to raise the minimum wage for federal contract workers to \$10.10 an hour and crack-down on wage theft and other labor law violations. This has helped not only struggling contract workers, but also millions of financially-strapped workers in the private sector. We urge you to continue taking bold executive action to help restore the middle class by making the government a “model employer.”

In the year since you declared that you would “lead by example” through executive action, major companies have started to increase pay, mayors issued executive orders to raise wages, and state and local governments overwhelmingly passed minimum wage hikes. In addition to spurring the growing national movement to pay living wages, your legal compliance order encouraged numerous cities and states to adopt similar measures to end wage theft.

Now is the time to further build on that momentum.

The federal government continues to be America’s largest low-wage job creator, subsidizing poverty-level wages through taxpayer-financed contracts, loans and grants with private companies. To add insult to injury, many of these contract workers are forced to rely on public assistance programs to supplement their meager incomes. That means taxpayers are double-billed – once for the cost of the contract and then again for the cost of public programs like food stamps and Medicaid.

We believe that our taxpayer dollars should reward good companies that create middle class jobs for America, not companies that force workers to depend on public aid programs.

We therefore call on you to issue an executive order giving preference in government contracting to “model employers” who pay a living wage, offer fair healthcare and retirement benefits, grant paid leave for sickness and care-giving, provide full-time hours and stable schedules, and give workers a voice through collective bargaining so they do not need to strike to be heard.

You have held up profitable companies, such as Costco, as examples of model employers to be emulated because they pay their workers living wages and benefits as well as respect their right to organize unions. Now is the time to declare that the federal government will invest our taxpayer dollars to incentivize model employers that commit to creating good jobs and to rebuilding America’s ailing middle class.

Mr. President, the stroke of your pen can have transformative impact for millions of workers. As low-wage fast food, retail and federal contract workers continue to strike in growing numbers to “Fight for \$15 and a Union”, we urge you to harness the power of the Presidency to help these workers achieve the American Dream.

With the economy rebounding and unemployment declining, now is the time to make sure hard-working Americans share in the rewards of our renewed prosperity. We look forward to working with you to rebuild the middle class by having the federal government serve as a model employer.

Sincerely,



Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Edward Markey  
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator



Ronald Wyden  
United States Senator



Barbara Mikulski  
United States Senator



Al Franken  
United States Senator



Jeff Merkley  
United States Senator



Chris Murphy  
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



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Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



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Jack Reed  
United States Senator



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Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



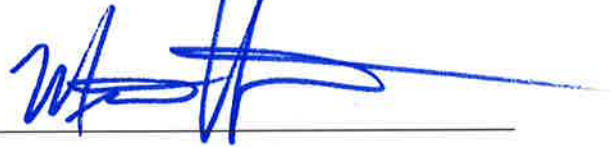
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Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



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Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



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Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator