

Sabathani Community Center General Session Summary

February 21, 2017

General comments:

- Disparities cause wars and I'm concerned that we're going to lose Keith Ellison to a larger role and I think that we'll lose the momentum for a minimum wage increase. We need to change the language from minimum wage to living wage. When we talk about the bottom and low wages, we need to include high wages. Why is the CEO of a large company making \$100,000 a year and taxpayers have to take care for their employees?
- I work with poor and homeless individuals. One of the problems with a higher minimum wage is that poor people will not be able to get jobs and/or will lose jobs. In the market, I'm probably not worth more than \$10/hr. We have an earned income credit and could have guaranteed yearly earnings. Workers could take over business and buy out public and private partnerships.
- I'm self-employed, and I do think that we should consider this as something we should do regionally. We (businesses) don't necessarily exist within city limits. I used to live outside of city and had no access to transportation and rent was high, as low income workers we have to be mindful that we aren't restricted to city limits.
- I work for McDonalds in Minneapolis, I've never made minimum wage and never been given a raise. I've seen people come and go because they aren't making enough money. Some of us are lucky that we have social security to fall back on, but we should put that to bed and put people back to work. I can never seem to get enough. You're offering \$12 for my day and for me to come and take care of your customers. It's my responsibility to make sure customers receive good service. If you give me \$12/hr, I'll be happier, but not happy. \$15 would be better. We've heard about how people can't afford to do this, but why are you talking about opening a 3rd store or taking vacations. These paid sick days that we fought hard to earn are now hard to find and we don't get a response when we ask for them. If you are Christians, maybe we need to get like Daniel and hit the giant in the head with the rock. I think we deserve this wage of \$15/hr, right now, right here, as we stand.
- I'm a housing access supervisor, and work to find folks with mental illness housing. I'm very aware of the rents in Hennepin County and wages are not keeping up with rents. I'm very aware of the cost people are paying. A lot of our lower wage workers - disproportionately the poor and adult women - are struggling to get by. \$15 would be

preferred because at a lower wage people can't get by if working multiple jobs, going to school, etc. That's not the type of service we want to offer our most vulnerable adults.

- Affordability of housing could be a bench mark for setting the minimum wage.
- Contextualize what's going on with the listening sessions and Minneapolis/St. Paul. We live in the Trump area – trump nominated the CEO of Hardee's whose company has been sued multiple times for sexual harassment and wage theft. Allan Greenspan, head of the FED, has kept the economy growing by keeping workers unstabilized. We're at the highest level of income disparities in the US. Many of us can feel it, but it's not addressed. We're at a crucial point in our city and in our country. We can decide if we want to keep exploiting workers and have taxpayers pay to support them, or we can pay workers a higher wage. We've tried to do that at a state level. The state right now is trying to take away your paid sick time, with the preemption bill, we need to keep the pressure on our elected officials and not assume that they're not on our side. We need to stay vigilant. We need a higher wage now and are tired of these games where we are not listened to by the people we elected.
- I work in a retail store and I make \$9.52 an hr. I've been working there for a year, and last week I got a \$0.02 raise. Our store has record sales, and is one of the top stores. I've receive reviews and they were outstanding and I still only got \$0.02. The biggest raise I've received was when the minimum wage went up. The company could easily afford it and is still be making money. I think we get really bogged down in the number, and data, I think it's important to understand where it's coming from. I don't think you can put a number on someone's life or livelihood. I think business will always be against paying a higher wage. The questions (in the presentation) are geared towards businesses when we need to talk to workers. Do you want to put a number on our lives? The tears we've cried? We need to be able to support ourselves in a job where we work 40 hrs a week. For those working minimum wage, working 40 hrs a week sounds like a vacation. I would love to be able to pay my rent, eat out at a restaurant, etc. We need to remember that we're workers and not a number.
- In my work doing housing access, we always talk about this is how you can get someone a low cost bus pass, how you can get rent subsidies, etc. At a certain point it just becomes that you need to pay people a living wage. I think this is something we can do in Minneapolis and need to do in Minneapolis. It would be great if it spread to the region, state, nation, but I think it's realistic in our city and where we need to start.
- Why are all of the questions so business focused? Why isn't this the people's meeting. I work in the healthcare profession. I'm really concerned about the health of my neighbors, my children, etc. I had a chance to listen to the MN Department of Health present their white paper. This paper is published and repeated everywhere. The more money you make the healthier you are. The less money you make the more sick you are. Yet we continue to have people argue about paying people a higher wage. The Roy

Wilkins study, says if we pay people more it will move 4 -7% of families out of the food insecure status. That's a huge deal if you're in the 4-7%. I strongly support a \$15 wage and we need to stop listening to the fear tactics that are being thrown out.

- How do you change the mindset of business community that is against this? If we look at the early 20th century and how we got to a minimum wage and a 40 hr week. It happened begrudgingly. Even the arguments that business are using to counter raising the wage. None of the data backs up their arguments and their lost on the moral argument as well. No number is ever going to be high enough. Until we have business that care about more than just their profits. Nothing will change. Don't wait for their support.
- My mom is college educated and doesn't make minimum wage. I make \$15/hr and don't have kids and am just scraping by. Parents need to be able to take care of their kids.
- It's a scary thing to look at. When I told my boss about this raise, we brought up the price of a big mac and the cost having to go up. There are people who are going to complain about prices going up, but that's always the case. There are people who are homeless, and struggling who will benefit from this. His excuse for not paying the wage is that he has to hire people who don't know how to sweep. If you are going to raise the prices, raise our wages so we can come to your restaurant, so we can afford to buy new shoes since we stand on our feet for 12 hrs a day. We go home and we're dead and we're worked to the bone. I don't mind coming out for these conversations, but it's getting more expensive to come out. We need to go over the top issues so we can save more money. If we have lower income workers making more money at bigger corporations they can be the light to the lower wage workers at small companies.
- I've worked McDonalds for 4 yrs. I'm in this fight to raise the minimum wage because it's not enough especially when CEO's are making millions of dollars a year. While owners and bosses are saying there isn't enough money, and they are on vacation, we're at the business doing the job. While we're there trying to get the job done and doing what we can. The boss is only paying us the very minimum. They're short staffed and we're still there trying to get the work done. I'm in this fight because there are a lot of families out there struggling, while my boss is out on vacation, my son is asking me when we'll be able to do something like that. It's not fair. We deserve to have access to things like that. My boss is out driving a luxury car, and we're out here struggling. If they can afford that why can't they pay me a higher wage? My boss knows that I'm in this fight, because I've stood up for myself, she actually treats me a bit better, but we deserve dignity.
- I'm an organizer working with fast food workers, people can't be here because they are working 2 jobs and trying to be involved in their kids' lives. When the city council was elected they ran on racial equity and we have some of the worst racial equity in the state. People working close to fulltime, and are homeless, is not okay. I know a person

that was homeless working 2 shifts a day on \$8/hr and she died. This is a health crisis, people living on minimum wage live on average 8 years less than those making more. If business can't afford to pay more, what kind of business are they running? People are human and we deserve more. We should raise the wage to \$15/hr because of the sexual harassment implications. We need to make sure that we're taking care of our most vulnerable workers.

- It's pretty clear that as part of a holistic solution to the problems people suggested, we need to do something to make sure that small business is able to survive. Small businesses have far fewer avenues to explore to raise wages than large companies. Part of the problem with the presentation is that it's geared towards businesses. We (\$15 Now) have the Roy Wilkins study and a proposal on the table, most studies said no bad impact or maybe a small impact, \$15 Now has a proposal for a 5 year phase in for small businesses so that small businesses could survive. Give large businesses a 3 year phase in because they can afford it. As a small business owner, one that is now paying workers \$15/hr has them moving towards \$15/hr, I had to analyze my business model and I feel like I was forced to build a strong businesses as a result.
- We do need to look at caps at the top proportionally. If you are fast food company working in Minnesota, or a large retailer, if you have a CEO pulling in a million dollars then you need to support our workers in our state because we aren't going to finance your company by paying for your slave force. When you make people poor, you make them hungry, you make them desperate, and when you make them poor and you can't afford car insurance, you get pulled over and now you're the bad guy. You have legal fines you can't handle and a criminal record. We've got to have imagination as we think about this topic.
- Being poor is very expensive. I'm a tipped worker, I do end up making more than minimum wage after tips, now that I'm making more, and I'm working to fight for justice for others. My roommate also makes more than minimum wage, but struggles to pay for her medicine/medical bills. She can't afford to buy healthy food which makes the problem worse. We need to consider intersectionality, you can't just have a focus on one issue without considering the others. I think we need \$15 now, for everyone. The increase would make an extraordinary difference.
- Minimum wage is a misnomer because its only minimum wage if you are working. The wage increase would disproportionately hurt young, black, youth. The minimum wage doesn't work, it just makes poverty worse. I agree that CEO's are making too much money. We need collective businesses were workers own the business. If we have a guaranteed base income then profit just goes on top of your income. The min wage is a hurdle I have to jump over. If I don't have a high school education, if I'm a youth.

- I'm a small business owner. I pay far above the minimum wage and pay health insurance. I work 60– 70 hrs a week because this is something I did because I loved what I was doing, but I missed out on my kids growing up. I don't like the blanket approach that the city should be able to tell a business owner what to do with their business. Please don't continue to create a divide, I'm part of this city, and a community member, but don't think the city should apply a blanket approach to everyone.
- I understand that some businesses won't survive with a higher wage, but if I'm told I should go find a job to make more money, then you can also go find a job where you make more money. People deserve to make a living wage.
- Having healthcare tied to business should be looked at. I don't think our health should be tied to our employers.
- I want to reiterate one important point that the state is currently considering a preemption bill that could make all of this null and void. This would prevent cities from passing things like minimum wage and paid sick time just like we've done in Minneapolis.