

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and honorable members of the committees: my name is Jeffrey Adams and I live in Lewiston.

I'm here to talk about wages. Last year the legislature voted to raise the minimum wage in Maine, but Mainers are still waiting for that raise. I don't have to try hard to imagine what it's like to try to provide for a family on \$14.15 an hour. Growing up as the child of a single mom who struggled to make ends meet, I saw up close and personal the harmful impacts of low wages and income inequality. Those impacts pass from one generation to the next.

Now, I earn \$17 per hour as the manager of a car wash. To my disappointment and disbelief, I was just offered a 76-cent raise after a positive annual review. I am making plenty of money for the Massachusetts-based company that employs me: my location alone brought in millions of dollars last year, and most of that money left the state as profits for higher-ups. There's no doubt the rich are getting richer. Meanwhile, for me, a 76-cent raise does almost nothing to combat the increasing costs of food and other personal needs.

Sometimes we hear that it's okay for some jobs to pay below a living wage because they're entry-level, or they're held by teenagers who are working for spending money. That's just not true. One of my assistants is 60, and he makes \$16/hour. I just turned fifty, and the money I make has to pay for rent, child support, daycare, car payment, insurance, electricity, and other expenses. And that's after my health insurance comes out of my check.

One thing I've learned is that life is short. My time is worth a lot, and right now I'm at work more than I'm in my kids' lives. Everybody deserves to be rewarded for working hard. It's the ultimate American dream for everyone to get a piece of the pie. We all want to provide for our families and own a home. Raising the minimum wage to \$15 isn't enough, but it's a step.

Chances are, I'll find a better job, but people in Maine will still want somebody to wash their trucks. Let me be clear: Corporate America pays low because they can. You have the power to ask them to do better for all of us.

Thank you for your time.