

My name is Jay Van and I live at 2018 Derad Street in Pittsburgh. I am working to support my wife and kids with 6 kids now staying in my home. I'm a hard worker and just want a job that allows me to take care of my family.

I work two jobs now for two local sandwich shops in downtown Pittsburgh and Highland Park. My boss asked me not to mention the name since I think he feels badly about the low wages he pays his workers. I've been working now for more than a year and a half. I started out at \$5.15 an hour and now have reached the top rate of pay which is almost \$7.00 per hour. It is a little easier to get by at my current wage than it was at the minimum wage.

The problem with low wage work is that you can never really keep up. You live check to check. Every month the money runs short and any unusual bill puts you behind. You always have to borrow money and then paying it back puts you behind the next month. I can never save up enough to get a car that would give me a chance for a better job.

My biggest concern is health insurance. I can't afford it for myself or my kids. My kids get government help by I don't. So when I get sick I wait until I can't work anymore and then my wife pushes me to go to the hospital. Then I get more bills and can't afford to get the medicine the doctor tells me to get.

Part of my problem is my past. When I was younger I got in trouble and now have a criminal record. This hangs over my head every time I try to get a better job. I work too many hours to be able to go to school to get a skill. Besides I have several friends who have graduated from technical schools and they can't get any better jobs either.

Finally, let me say that working hard and not making enough money to take care of myself and my family is really discouraging, it takes away the ambition to keep doing the right thing. Many people give up and go back to dealing drugs or other illegal things to make more money. Then they get caught, go to prison and can't get decent paying job when they get out. It is a bad cycle to get into.

I'm going to stay out of trouble but we need you to raise the minimum wage to help us. Please pass a law that will make work pay so me and others like me can work hard and make ends meet. Thank you for listening to my story.