

## Testimony of Maria D. Perez, child care worker to the Senate Labor and Industry Committee, May 5, 2015

My name is Maria D. Perez. I am a single mother from the Juniata Park neighborhood in Philadelphia. Senator Tartaglione is my Senator. My daughter is eight years old and attends a charter school in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

I work as a group supervisor at Brightside Academy Child Care Center. I am currently going to Community College of Philadelphia for criminal justice, although I am now taking a break from school because of work. I went to CCP for early childhood education for which I have accumulated 30 plus credits towards my Associate's Degree.

I have worked at Brightside Academy for three years. As a day care teacher I have worked with all age groups, from infants to school-age. At my day care center we ask teachers to teach our children from as early as six weeks old. Early childhood education is very important for our children's development. The children in the daycare learn a lot, sometimes they even surprise us. We need to take care of our children by ensuring that people in this field get paid enough to stay and keep working with the children.

We love our jobs and enjoy teaching our future leaders. Sadly, we are underpaid and struggle in our daily lives. I now get paid \$9.60 an hour. In three years that I've been working there I only got a \$.10/hour raise. I get paid \$620 every two weeks. Somehow I manage to pay rent which is \$700, plus bills for electric, car note, insurance, gas and cable. There are some of my coworkers who are receiving \$8.60 an hour, which is ridiculous. We all have credits from colleges and also have major experience in the work field, but we struggle to take care of our children while we educate yours.

So it's not too much to ask that we should receive a couple of extra dollars per hour. I need it so that I have a little bit of spending money for my own child at home or to have enough money for that bill that I am struggling to catch up on. As a young mother I would love to have trips to go on with my daughter and have extra money for things that my child would love that I cannot give to her. I would love to be able to survive in my life without the stresses of the daily struggles of living paycheck to paycheck.

To raise the minimum wage, in my opinion, would be a great help for us daycare workers and of course everyone else that worked really hard, just to make ends meet. Please act quickly to raise the minimum wage to at least \$10.10 or to even \$15, which I have heard so much about. Let us have a decent life too.