

Testimony of Elizabeth Colon, President and Founder of Metaphrasis Language & Cultural Solutions and 2014 Illinois Small Business Person of the Year

**For the Illinois Senate Committee of the Whole
June 23, 2015**

My name is Elizabeth Colon, President and Founder of Metaphrasis Language & Cultural Solutions and recipient of the 2014 Illinois Small Business Person of the Year award by the U.S. Small Business Association (SBA). I was also named 2015 Business Owner of the Year by the National Association of Women Business Owners (Chicago).

I strongly support increasing our state minimum wage as it is good for business and good for Illinois. Giving low-income households more money to spend will enable them to make ends meet and will be a direct boost to businesses and our economy.

The minimum wage should reinforce the value of hard work and ethics, and not make it harder to make ends meet and succeed in life. As someone who was raised in a single family home of six children, I understand the difficulties that families face with limited income. I know what it's like to work hard and struggle as a family, wondering how rent was going to be paid and deciding which bill gets paid first. I remember as a teenager working at a local grocery store earning \$4.25 an hour (not adjusted for inflation). I had to give my mother my entire check for us to get by, but I also remember how hard I worked to earn my check. Although I was promoted numerous times, it did not mean that I was making more.

I sympathize with people who I know work for years at the minimum wage without raises, or when I drive by a bus stop and see someone waiting at 5 am to make it to work, tired and unhappy.

As a successful business owner in Chicago and Frankfort, I made a commitment to value the employees I hire and to pay them above minimum wage. I believe the Illinois Senate should do the same.

I find that employees paid above the minimum wage are less stressed and distracted by how they are going to pay their bills. Those same employees are more loyal and committed to making our company run successfully and grow. They take pride in seeing that their contributions lead to higher pay.

Giving someone the opportunity to earn more than today's inadequate minimum wage gives them a sense of dignity and hope to be able to provide for themselves and their children. Raising the minimum wage will allow parents to spend more time with their children instead of struggling to make ends meet, often at two or three jobs.

Raising the minimum wage will strengthen businesses and communities and boost our economy. If people make more, they will spend more where they work and live. Think of



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raising the minimum wage as economic development that doesn't depend on government spending.

I urge the Illinois Senate to pass an increase in the minimum wage so it reaches at least \$11 by July 2019 as called for in Senate Bill 2145.

Thank you.

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