Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 20, 2015

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write in strong support of the Department of Labor's proposed action to strengthen overtime standards. We applaud your Administration's efforts to help middle class families get the pay they have worked for by modernizing the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) regulations for overtime pay. Overtime protections are vital to ensure that workers earn a fair day's pay for a fair day's work.

The Department of Labor's (DOL) proposed regulation will raise the overtime salary threshold to $50,440 a year and automatically adjust the salary threshold going forward, so that salaried workers earning under $50,440 a year will earn time-and-a-half for hours worked over forty hours a week. Strengthening overtime protections by increasing the salary threshold restores the forty-hour work week—a cornerstone of middle-class life in America. It gives these workers more time with their families, and simultaneously encourages employers to provide additional hours of work to those part-time workers who want and need them to make ends meet.
Since the 1970s, average salaries for middle-class workers have dropped, even while salaried workers have increased the number of hours they spend on the job. Growing income inequality, stagnant wages, and rising family economic insecurity have all contributed to shrinking the once-robust American middle class. Today, too many Americans are working longer and harder with less to show for their efforts, partly because very few workers are eligible for overtime pay. The current salary threshold of $23,660 a year—which is less than the poverty threshold for a family of four–covers only eight percent of the workforce. This means that a majority of the workforce are left unprotected, some of whom are earning just over $455 a week. These are not the highly-compensated executives and professionals to whom the exemption was intended to apply. They are struggling middle-class workers who are too often overworked without any additional compensation for the extra hours they work.

In 1975, almost two-thirds of American salaried workers earned a salary below the threshold and were automatically covered by the overtime protections guaranteed under the FLSA. Raising the salary level as proposed by the Department and your Administration would increase the number of workers eligible for overtime pay by five million, covering 40 percent of American salaried workers. In addition, your proposal to index the threshold would ensure that the new threshold will continue to be meaningful for workers in the future.

We urge you to maintain this robust proposed rule and move without delay to a final rule. Thank you for your ongoing efforts to help working families succeed and strengthen the middle class.

Sincerely,

PATTY MURRAY
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on HELP

ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and the Workforce

BERNARD SANDERS
U.S. Senator

FREDERICA S. WILSON
Ranking Member
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SHERROD BROWN
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