United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 29, 2015

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue Northwest
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We commend you for your commitment to strengthen overtime protections for American workers. Overtime protections are vital to helping middle class workers and our economy. As you work on the final regulation, we encourage you to increase the overtime threshold to at least $1,090 a week ($56,680 a year) and index it to inflation.

Too many Americans are working longer and harder without anything to show for their efforts in their paychecks. These long hours are straining middle class workers and their families. Since the 1970s, average salaries for middle class individuals have dropped even while salaried workers have increased the hours they spend on the job. Strengthening overtime protections will help millions of middle class families.

Current regulations fail to protect the majority of the workforce. Today, the salary threshold that determines who is automatically eligible for overtime coverage is so low that earning as little as $455 a week ($23,660 a year) could result in being exempted from being eligible for overtime. Only 11 percent of salaried workers earn less than the current overtime threshold, a drastic departure from the past when most workers earned overtime pay. In 1975, 65 percent of American salaried workers were under the income threshold. To cover 65 percent of salaried workers today, the income threshold would need to be increased to $1,327 (around $69,000 a year).

Raising the income threshold to at least $56,680 a year will restore the monetary value of the income threshold to 1975 levels and make approximately 47 percent of salaried workers eligible for overtime pay. These are middle class workers who have been working longer hours but without additional compensation. You have an opportunity to help these workers get a fair day's pay for a hard day's work by restoring the income threshold to at least its 1975 value ($56,680 a year) and indexing it to inflation.

Thank you for your ongoing efforts to help middle class families.

Sincerely,

Patty Murray

Senator Patty Murray
Ranking Member, HELP Committee

Bernie Sanders

Senator Bernard Sanders
Ranking Member, Budget Committee

Barbara Mikulski
U.S. Senator

Richard Durbin
U.S. Senator

Sherrod Brown
U.S. Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
U.S. Senator

Al Franken
U.S. Senator

Debbie Stabenow
U.S. Senator

Robert P. Casey Jr.
U.S. Senator

Martin Heinrich
U.S. Senator

Elizabeth Warren
U.S. Senator

Tammy Baldwin
U.S. Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
U.S. Senator

Jack Reed
U.S. Senator

Richard Blumenthal
U.S. Senator

Charles E. Schumer
U.S. Senator

Ed Markey
U.S. Senator

Patrick J. Leahy
U.S. Senator

Mazie Hirono
U.S. Senator

Christopher Murphy
U.S. Senator

Brian Schatz
U.S. Senator

Maria Cantwell
U.S. Senator

Jeanne Shaheen
U.S. Senator

Cory Booker
U.S. Senator

Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator

Benjamin L. Cardin
U.S. Senator

Cc: The Honorable Thomas Perez, Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor