

**Testimony of Edith Kimball,  
Elementary School Food Services Professional, Lee, FL**

**“The Economic and Budget Outlook for Individuals, Families, and Communities”  
Before the  
U.S. Senate Budget Committee  
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My name is Edith Kimball and I thank you for inviting me to be here today. I have been married to my husband Kenny for 14 years. We have three children, 9 year old twins, a boy named Cameron and a girl named Olivia; and a 7 year old son, Jacob. I have lived my entire life in my small town of Lee, Florida, where I have worked as a food service professional at Lee Elementary School for the past 3 years.

Lee is a rural town in Madison County between Tallahassee and Jacksonville and near the Florida/Georgia state line. It's a caring community where you know just about everybody and people are willing to help out and lend a hand when someone is in need. We have a saying in Lee, “Little, But Proud.”

Our county is one the poorest in the state. And jobs have been tough to come by. About 20 years ago, a meat packing plant closed down. It was a place where hard work was rewarded, you could move up the ladder, and provide for your family. A lot of workers were the second or third generation in their family to work there. When the plant closed its doors it devastated many families.

I feel blessed to work at our elementary school where I work with my mother, who is the food service manager. Together, we prepare and serve almost 200 meals each day. Lee Elementary is a school full of great, well-mannered kids who say “Yes Ma'am” and “No Ma'am”. My school is special because of the caring teachers who pour their hearts into teaching their students. As a parent, I appreciate this.

My school, like our county, is poor. A few years ago almost all our kids were on free or reduced price lunch, and now a new grant helps provide meals to all of them. I love preparing healthy meals for them, even though many are picky eaters. And I know many of their families, like mine, struggle to make ends meet.

Before the elementary school, I worked for a local grocery store for 10 years. I still remember families would come in with food stamps and I knew they had to make that food last for their family till the end of the month. After Jacob was born, I chose not to return to the grocery because of the high cost of child care. It just didn't make sense for our budget. And I needed a job that would let me be there for my children after school. My prayers were answered when I got my job at Lee Elementary.

I knew that the pay wouldn't be that great, but I would be there for my children, especially my oldest son, who is a special needs child. And be home to help my other two children with their

homework, to become better students. Being home when my kids are home is important. My husband Kenny is a truck driver and is on the road for 4-6 weeks at a time.

Kenny is the owner/operator of his truck, which means he pays the maintenance and all costs for it. Between fuel costs, truck payments, and maintenance – there isn't a lot left over at the end of the month. We get by decently. We pay our bills, buy groceries, and pay our tithe to our church but there's no room for extras at the end of the month.

I know that Congress is talking about raising the minimum wage. For me, in my job, that would mean an increase of \$200 more a month for my family. That would help give us a just a little more in our budget. It could help me open a college savings plan for my children for their future.

Every parent wants the best for their children and I am not any different than any other parent. My daughter, Olivia wants to be a doctor. It is my responsibility to see to it that she gets the best education available. I have told her she will have to study and work hard and I would do my best to see that she could fulfill that dream. But, right now that is going to be difficult for my family.

I know other families in my town that would be helped by an increase in the minimum wage too. And I think it would make more people want to work. It is my prayer that you will think about towns like mine and families like mine when you make major decisions here. We should not be forgotten and left by the wayside.

Thank you to Chairwoman Murray and all of you for the chance to talk to you today.