***Using your personal, academic, or volunteer/work experiences, describe the topics or issues that you care about and why they are important to you. Your response should show us that your interests align with the ILR School (650)***

After my encounter with a taxi driver on a ride home, seeing how an employee was more enthusiastic with his job after being given a tip, I began to realize how impactful simple incentives could be. From exploring the applications of behavioral economics outside of school, I learned the importance of human capital. This spark of enthusiasm inevitably leads to higher labor productivity which, in turn, increases a company's profitability.

Interning in Wagely furthered my knowledge of the role that employee productivity, driven by wellness, plays in a company. Wagely enabled employees to get earned wage access at any day within zero cost to the company. As a result, companies have shown an up to 88% increase in employee wellness. It got me thinking: Small and medium enterprises make up 60% of Indonesia’s GDP alone. How much more would Indonesia’s economy grow if labor productivity was prioritized?

I turned to independent research on the tobacco industry through the Malang Youth Challenge. I found that workers were often mistreated. In addition to hazardous working environments—from exposure to toxic pesticides and chemicals—thousands of workers are underpaid child laborers. What ultimately drew my attention was when I talked to one of them, Dinda. Dinda’s parents planted tobacco in one of the farms just an hour away from my home. She was 15 and still in high school. Instead of studying and doing homework after school however, she cultivated tobacco in the fields: her own backyard. Headaches, nausea and vomiting—all symptoms of nicotine poisoning—were a routine to her. I soon found that though Indonesia has a strong labor law, there was a lot of gray area.

As I connected the dots, I realized that the main reason for low labor productivity in Indonesia was due to the poor employee treatment. As a socially responsible entrepreneur, I would get the freedom to not only optimize labor activity by providing a healthy and comfortable working environment, I would also be able to advocate against child laborers by working together with the government to provide children with safer opportunities while monitoring their education. Majoring in Cornell’s Industrial and Labor Relations with a minor in economics would open the window of opportunities that actualized my vision—the interdisciplinary education that fulfills my broad interests within the social sciences while expanding my studies specific to labor productivity in a company.

After pitching to numerous clients about the Wagely app, I found that more workers were faster to activate their account once told that they had a chance to be considered in a giveaway Wagely was holding. This advanced my understanding of incentives towards productivity. Working under Professor Diane Burton through the Institute for Compensation Studies, more specifically in the Employer Practices Research and Training Center, would equip me with expertise on the use of wage and incentives to compensate employee performance well and promote productivity. Compensation, Incentives and Productivity ILRLE 4430 would train my analytical skills of identifying and mitigating labor-related business problems. Comparing the effects of regulations after the pandemic through IRL School’s New Conversations Project allows me to observe robust and sustainable labor practices around the world before one day following that path through my own ethical ventures.

At Cornell, I intend to leverage the school’s focus on interdisciplinary learning to ensure sustainability in my entrepreneurship venture. Building a business proposal in INASEC acquainted me to the importance of financial management, especially in anticipating harsh economic circumstances. Exploring risk management strategies in Cornell’s Financial Risk club would prepare me with strategies of building and maintaining a solid financial portfolio. Analyzing mental health in the workforce through the Institute on Health Economics, Health Behaviors and Disparities allows me to build better employer branding.

At Cornell’s ILR, I’d be home to countless new resources and opportunities, gaining a better understanding of what it takes to advance the nourishment of human capital around the world.