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**Testimony before the Labor Committee  
Re. SB 5291, AN ACT INCREASING THE MINIMUM WAGE**

**February 28, 2012**

Submitted by Liz Dupont-Diehl, Policy Director, Connecticut Association for Human Services  
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Good afternoon, Senator Prague and Representative Zalaski, and members of the committee. My name is Liz Dupont-Diehl and I am the Policy Director for the Connecticut Association for Human Services. CAHS works to end poverty and empower all families to build a secure economic future. CAHS produces research on child poverty and other issues as needed to drive advocacy. We also operate a number of programs to help people become self-sufficient, such as SNAP benefit outreach, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance, financial literacy classes and Earned Benefits Outreach, which helps people connect with eligible benefits to help them access health care, meet basic needs and become self-sufficient.

CAHS supports an increase in the minimum wage, and especially an automatic index to increase the minimum wage with inflation, as a critical foundation for healthy families and communities throughout our state. Minimum wage is below poverty, and 70% of Connecticut's minimum wage workers are older than 20. As we head into a session on education reform, it's important to remember that children come from families – and families need the ability to earn a living wage without adults working two or three jobs. Even the best schools won't succeed in communities of highly concentrated poverty, and poverty is the inevitable result now for too many working adults with low education and skills in our state. Families need to be able to afford housing, food, clothing and other necessities. The stress of poverty is an extremely damaging influence on children as they develop and on families and our communities.

This minimum wage increase would immediately put more money into the hands of working families, most of whom will spend it on goods and services near their homes and thereby stimulate the economy of their community and the state. It will also ensure that the purchasing power of minimum-wage workers keeps pace with inflation to protect them as time goes on.

I know you will hear testimony from businesses who fear that a higher minimum wage will hurt their ability to compete. But the state's current economy, where so many families are working full-time to live in poverty, is equally or more damaging.

The state is taking many of the right steps as we focus on education reform, our neediest children and schools, and building a better base for businesses. Employers and workers alike need a system that allows them the opportunity to succeed. More and more of our jobs are service-sector and others that pay minimum wage. It's critical that these workers can earn enough to meet basic needs and give their children the foundation they need.

Thank you for your time and attention.

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