



**Connecticut Farm Bureau Association**

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February 27, 2012

**Letter in Opposition to: Raised Bill 5291 AN ACT INCREASING THE MINIMUM WAGE, REMOVING THE MINIMUM WAGE TIP CREDIT, AND INCREASING THE PENALTIES FOR FAILURE TO PAY THE MINIMUM WAGE.**

Submitted by: Donald Tuller, President, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association

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*The following testimony is submitted on behalf of the Connecticut Farm Bureau, a statewide nonprofit membership organization of over 5,000 families dedicated to farming and the future of Connecticut agriculture.*

Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, and Members of the Labor and Public Employee Committee

We would like to strongly express our opposition to these proposed increases in the Connecticut minimum wage included in Raised Bill 5291. It will be damaging to all of Connecticut Farmers, no matter what size their farm might be, and you can substitute the words "Small Business" for "Farmers", and it will still be true.

Let's start with the first 75 cent increase. It's not really just 75 cents is it? When you add in the other employer wage costs, FICA, Medicare, Ct Unemployment, Federal Unemployment, and Workman's Comp. (The last 3 vary depending on the business), the real increase is closer to 90 cents than it is to 75. On top of that, every other time you have raised the minimum wage, employers cut back on worker numbers to control employment costs, (We really do!!!) so unemployment will increase, to say nothing of new jobs that are never created. As a result of that reality, it will also be reasonable to expect a higher unemployment assessment. And let's talk about the lie that it will only affect minimum wage workers. In the nearly 30 years that I have been writing paychecks, (I used to start my workers at above minimum wage, but cannot afford to now), every time the minimum wage is raised, all of my employees expect the same bump. I'm surprised that you haven't included that in the bill, but that would require a bit more honesty, wouldn't it? How many contracts have been written in this state based on a differential above minimum wage, that will also be affected by this legislation? Do you have any idea what the economic impact of this proposed legislation really is?

Agriculture is one of the few bright spots in Connecticut's Economy. We don't ask you to care, all we ask is that you do no harm. Small Farmers that grow for local sales are competing against producers that ship into the state from other states and countries with lower costs already. This bill would increase that disparity. Maybe you don't care what your food costs, but most consumers are price sensitive, and "locally grown" only gets you so far.

We have large growers (plants and vegetables to mention two large areas impacted) that grow for wholesale distribution. Their ability to win those contracts turn on pennies or fractions of pennies per unit. My cousin and I operate Tulmeadow Farm in West Simsbury. Dairy Farmers have no control over the price that they get for their milk, and cannot pass the increase on. They are already on financial life support. We raise vegetables, grass fed beef, hay, and make ice cream. Every aspect of our business is labor intensive, and will be negatively affected. I have estimated that if I have the same number of worker hours as last year (if you pass these increases I will not), it will cost our business around extra ten thousand dollars. That's money

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that will not be invested in repairs or improvements. Most of the people that I hire are high school and college age seasonal workers. For many, it is their first job. We start them at minimum wage. These are not career jobs, We already went without paychecks last year to meet payroll and pay the bills. Honestly, for you to be seriously considering these increases is demoralizing to me, and I'm sure I am not alone. You are throwing us an anchor when you should be trying to help put wind in our sails.

We urge the defeat of Raised Bill 5291

Don Tuller President Connecticut Farm Bureau