

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



CHRISTOPHER G. DONOVAN
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

Good afternoon Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, Ranking Members and distinguished Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee.

My name is Chris Donovan and I represent the 84th district of Meriden. I am here today to speak in support of HB 5291, An Act Increasing the Minimum Wage. In addition to all the fine bills you're hearing today, I am also in support of: SB 181, S.B. 182, HB 5199, HB 5237.

When I first came to the Capitol as a State Representative in 1992, the minimum wage was only \$4.27 per hour. Since then, we have made good progress and Connecticut has raised the minimum wage 12 times over the last 20 years. While we have established incremental increases in the past at the state and federal levels in 1996, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2009, and 2010, indexing the minimum wage now will allow for an automatic increase in the minimum wage based on the cost of living. There is still more work to do.

At a time when we desperately need to get people back to work, we also need to recognize that those who do have jobs also need to make ends meet. Right now, a family of four, earning minimum wage at a full-time job, is still earning substantially less than the federal poverty limit. Experts have determined that to be self-sufficient in Connecticut, this same family must earn \$19.61 per hour just to cover the expenses of housing, child care, food, transportation, health care and minor emergency savings accounts. It is clear that a family earning minimum wage will not be able to meet its most basic needs.

We have 106,000 people in Connecticut earning the minimum wage, which is just \$8.25 an hour. A majority of them are women, at 53 percent and 80 percent of those 106,000 workers are over the age of 20.

This proposal would help hard-working families in Connecticut and will stimulate our economy to get it back on track. The National Federation of Independent Businesses indicate weak sales and lack of demand as some of the biggest hurdles businesses face in this economic climate. This is a form of economic stimulus that does not add to our state debt. Let us help both families and businesses.

I am not alone in championing this issue: Margot Dorfman, The President of the Women's Chamber of Commerce will be speaking today, along with noted economists, minimum wage workers and, even, business owners. We are not alone in raising this proposal. Many states are considering raising the minimum wage including New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts and it is clear the time to increase the minimum wage is now.

I understand the tip credit was inadvertently eliminated. I do not support eliminating the tip credit.

Thank you for your time and I urge your support for HB 5291.