

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB5291, FOR A HIGHER MINIMUM WAGE

To the Committee on Labor and Public Employees
February 28, 2012

Co-chairs, members of the committee,

I am writing in support of a raise in the minimum wage.

I work at a Wal-Mart, and I'm sure many of you are familiar with how that company compensates and treats its employees. I feel the need to speak out, because nearly everyone else at the store is too scared of the illegal, but very real, repercussions they might face for even discussing their working conditions to say anything, especially the most senior employees, who have seen it happen too many times before.

I have worked at the store for two and a half years now. In that time, my hourly wage has barely risen a dollar above the state minimum. I live with my mother and my sister, who is in high school, and am a breadwinner for the house. At such low wages, every month brings the anxiety of not knowing how we will make our rent. We have managed so far, but this doesn't leave much spending money for anyone in the family. It is very difficult, not being able to find better work in this economy, wondering if my sister will ever have a chance to continue her education, or if she'll be forced early into the workforce to support our family.

My job at Wal-Mart only prepares me for another minimum wage job in retail, it's not as if I have a promising future at Wal-Mart. I won't rise to a middle-class position here, and I certainly won't make the kind of money that executives at this corporation enjoy. This company made \$16,389,000,000 in profits - just profits - in 2011. With 16 billion dollars, they can manage to pay me a few dollars more per hour.

Please, please think of the thousands and thousands of families in Connecticut to who even a small increase can make all the difference in the world.

Thank you,
Jose Velez

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