

Testimony in Support of HB 5291
"AN ACT INCREASING THE MINIMUM WAGE"
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Members of the Joint Committee on Labor and Public Employees:

It is an honor to submit testimony to you in support of HB 5291, "An Act Increasing the Minimum Wage, Removing the Minimum Wage Tip Credit, and Increasing Penalties for Failure to Pay the Minimum Wage." I support this bill for a number of reasons.

First and foremost, as has been pointed out by many other proponents of this bill, including House Speaker Chris Donovan, the average full-time minimum wage earner in Connecticut working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, earns \$17,160 a year. This is simply not enough money for an individual to procure all of life's necessities (housing, food, medicine, transportation, utilities, computer access, clothing, etc.) through the course of a year in Connecticut. This is not enough money to ensure that an individual can conduct a safe and healthy life. This is certainly not enough money for an individual to engage in meaningful long-range financial planning. And if that individual has children, \$17,160 per year is a picture of economic hopelessness. It is simply not enough. Will HB 5291's proposed increase in the minimum wage be enough to alter the face of poverty in Connecticut? Probably not. But it will help plug some economic holes in the lives of minimum wage workers. It is one positive step state government can take to help ease the economic burdens minimum wage workers currently face.

Second, I am persuaded by the argument that higher paid workers are more satisfied, loyal, motivated and productive. Professor Johnny Williams explores the data supporting this argument in his February 19th *Hartford Courant* op-ed entitled, "Higher Minimum Wage Good for Workers, Economy." While some argue that raising the minimum wage creates an unfriendly climate for business, I'm not so sure. Do we want to live in a state that is racing to the bottom in terms of wages, where low-income and minimum wage workers have less money to spend and create an ever-growing drag on government resources and services? Or do we want to live in a state where wages keep pace with inflation, where fewer workers live in poverty, and where the work-force is more motivated and productive? In my view, the latter is the more business-friendly climate. Yes, it costs businesses slightly more to have a such a climate, but I suspect that extra cost pales in comparison to the costs associated with a more impoverished work-force.

Finally, I support HB 5291 because I believe it is the right thing to do. Life is hard for minimum wage workers. As a society we ought to make it our priority to do whatever we can realistically do to ease the burdens of the most vulnerable. Raising the minimum wage is one of those things we can realistically do.

Respectfully submitted,
The Rev. Joshua Mason Pawelek