

Regarding House Bill 5291

My name is Scott Lawton, and I am the Director of Operations, and an owner, of Barcelona Restaurants and Bar Taco restaurants. We employ between 250 and 300 people in seven cities and towns in the State of Connecticut, and have been in business for 16 years. We love being in Connecticut, and in return we remit about \$1.2 million to the state in sales taxes every year.

I am hoping that I can speak to you for a few minutes tomorrow, Tuesday, Feb 28, about HB 5291. I know that the subject of the minimum wage is controversial, and I am sure that you have heard from lots of constituents with strong feelings one way or another. I want to say at the outset that I have no strong opposition to the proposed minimum wage increase; I do think that it will put us at a disadvantage with regard to some neighboring states, but within Connecticut, at least, it is a level playing field. My concern is with the elimination of the tip credit. Well-intentioned or not, the effect will be to dramatically increase the pay of the *highest*-paid employees in the restaurant business, and the ones least likely to be supporting families, or who have made their work a true career. Waiter and bartenders earn well more than the minimum wage as it stands, and this bill will push many of them into an effective \$15 - \$20/hr "minimum wage." As a result, all hiring will decline, and the ones who will be hurt the most are the *true* minimum wage earners.

I would love the opportunity to discuss this in more enlightening detail if you can spare a brief moment; I will be up for the public hearing, and can make myself available at any time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Lawton", followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Scott R. Lawton