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Testimony IN SUPPORT of SB 387 AA Increasing the Fair Minimum Wage

**To Senator Osten, Representative Tercyak, Senator Markley and Representative Smith,
and the rest of the Labor Committee.**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of an increase in the minimum wage.
This is long overdue.

Let me tell you a little about my family business. Barrett Outdoor Communications is a billboard company founded in 1962 by my father, John P Barrett. It is now owned and operated by me and my brother Bruce. We are a large part of the Connecticut billboard industry and are considered to be an industry leader. We take great pride in being an industry leader and take that responsibility seriously by running our company in such a way as to be a model for others. We are members of numerous trade groups and serve on various committees. We are a founding member of the Center for Family Business at the University of New Haven. We take on social causes, and support numerous charities and community groups in the municipalities that we have signs in and support environmental groups like the Connecticut Fund for the Environment and Save the Sound.

We believe that there is a social contract with our employees and their families, we respect and take care of them and in turn they take care of our company. This not just the right thing to do, it is also the smart thing to do.

We base our wage structure on the MIT Living Wage Calculator¹ and our starting wage is a living falls between the New Haven County living wage for a single adult (currently \$10.57)² and a single adult with one child (currently \$22.91)³. We do this because we don't believe or employees should not struggle to make ends meet. An over worked employee working multiple jobs with inadequate

¹ Glasmeier, Amy K. "Poverty in America the Living Wage Calculator." *Living Wage Calculator*-. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2013. Web. 30 Jan. 2013.

² ibid

³ ibid

food, shelter and rest, does not provide good customer service or reliable quality work product. We provide full health care benefits with subsidized deductibles because we refuse to pass those expenses on to taxpayers through HUSKY or Medicaid benefits when we are capable of providing this necessity, and because our employees deserve to have access to health care. And, most importantly, we know unhealthy employees and employees stressed out over the health of their families cannot provide our customers the quality of service they deserve and expect.

Our business has weathered seven recessions, the stock market crashes of 1973, 1989, 2001 and 2008, and innumerate business challenges. But we never met these challenges by undercutting the pay of our employees. Our employees understand that when the economy is tough, we need to compete at our best to deliver the best value to our customers.

When times have been tough, it's because the economy slowed and there has been less demand for our services. Wage standards have nothing to do with it. Major changes in the economy are not produced by those at the bottom of the economic ladder, but by those at the top. Recovery starts at the bottom. Unlike many high income individuals, low-wage workers spend their money in their locally economies, spurring growth, and demand for our services. The fact is that higher wage standards produce a stronger economy.

Keeping the minimum wage low probably is good for the CEOs of large conglomerates and those who live off financial investments, but it doesn't help businesses like mine at all. Our employees deserve better, and our economy does as well.

Please pass SB387 to increase Connecticut's minimum wage