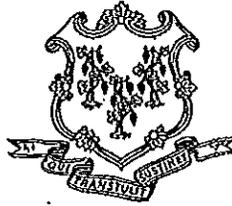


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January 31, 2013

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Tercyak and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. I am here to testify in support of HB 5713, AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF LABOR HISTORY IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM as well as in support of an increase in the minimum wage.

Do students know the story of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire and its importance for The New Deal and the passage of the National Labor Relations Act? Do they know what the "Wobblies" stood for? Do they know who the "Molly McGuires" were? Do they appreciate the historical significance of Eugene V. Debs, Samuel Gompers, and John L. Lewis? Have they learned the history of the Pullman strike? Have they read about the murder trials of "Big Bill" Haywood and Joe Hill? Do they understand that without labor unions there would be no leisure on weekends? Do they realize the inhuman and degrading conditions that the workers of the United States endured before labor successfully organized? Have they learned of the revolutionary use of social science in the "Brandeis Brief"? I fear they have not. These are but a few of the important historical lessons our children should be taught about the labor movement and the enlightened progress it has championed and helped to realize not only for union members but for the general benefit of society. In the words of the Czech

writer Milan Kundera, "The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting". We must teach our children to remember.

The history of organized labor is so much more than job-site action and organizing. Unions pushed state and federal elected officials and judges to grant workers the right to collective bargaining. This struggle taught individual workers that they can achieve success with dignity if they assert their collective power. This right is now being challenged. Students should know what is at stake in this challenge.

Organized Labor was a crucial partner in the fight for mine safety laws, workers' compensation laws, and the passage of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970. Labor fought for the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 among many others. Currently, organized labor is a key supporter of marriage equity. Without the contribution of organized labor, the average worker, even the average non-union worker, would have many fewer rights and benefits in employment. We owe it to the Children of Connecticut to teach them of these extraordinary contributions.

The cost of living is high in Connecticut and workers who earn minimum wage should not be asked to bear a disproportionate share of the burden in our sluggish economy. I appreciate the need for a bill such as SB 387, AN ACT INCREASING THE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE. However, I would like to suggest a slightly different format for

raising the minimum wage such as the one I set out in SB 56, *AN ACT CONCERNING AN INCREASE IN THE STATE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE*, which would increase the minimum fair wage by seventy-five cents on January 1, 2014, and by an additional seventy-five cents on January 1, 2015. The minimum wage was last raised in 2010 as a result of legislation passed in 2008. Workers who earn minimum wage are the least able to survive without increases to assist them in offsetting the increases in the cost of living. Since final General Assembly passage may not occur until relatively late in the session, a July 1st effective date may not be workable or realistic. An October 1st or January 1st effective date would provide more time for adjustment and planning.

Thank you for considering these highly important issues.

