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OPPOSING SB-32

Dear Labor Committee Members,

I am writing to oppose the current concept of raising the minimum wage, as it is far too blunt an instrument to address your and my concerns of adults supporting themselves on the minimum wage, regardless of the level that you attempt to raise it to.

The minimum wage is a training wage for people entering the workforce to learn the world of work and work skills when they have not yet demonstrated competency of those skills. These introductory employees take a lot of mentoring and supervision. The jobs are mostly temporary or seasonal, not year round permanent positions, and are orders of magnitude more plentiful in number than the small amount of subsidized summer jobs that Capitol Workforce Partners, or any government organization, can hope to develop. This is the basis of the private market apprenticeship and work education efforts to bring young people into the adult world of work. Summer jobs for youth are valuable for many reasons, and should not be lost in this discussion. The temporary nature of these jobs allows for the large swings in total employment for the organizations that use them in seasonal recreational and personal service businesses. Denying these workers to firms using this quality of labor would largely close down the firms, as prices for wages and supervision would be beyond many consumers ability to pay for the services.

I would propose that if you want to get adults to a "livable wage", you create a tiered system that allows new entrants to the workforce to enter at the minimum wage. We do have to be concerned with heads of households and couples supporting children where there is limited economic opportunity. I have cheered the Earned Income Tax credit for this reason; it perhaps should be expanded to help the individuals that you wish to assist.

For those people that do not file income taxes as dependents, then require a step up in wages over time of perhaps 3 or 6 month intervals to the wage you deem acceptable. This would allow new employees to demonstrate their abilities to employers and to grow in responsibility and pay over time. It may even serve as a template for people to learn job and supervision skills to start their own company and employ people on their own.

The solution to stagnant wages for all of us is to have a dynamic economy that has jobs available for people looking. Connecticut currently lacks the dynamic labor market that makes job mobility and higher pay possible. Employers will then know that they must pay progressively more for people with quality skills, ability, and the assumption of responsibility. If we have more employers, we will have more jobs that pay better. This proposal does nothing to expand employment or employer numbers, rather provides a raise to a few and lost opportunity to many.

Sincerely,

Dr. Chip Beckett, DVM