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To: Senator Osten, Representative Tercyak and Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee

Beverley Brakeman, UAW Region 9A Political Representative

Support SB 32 AN ACT CONCERNING WORKING FAMILIES' WAGES.  
HB 5066AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN WORKERS' RIGHTS TO COLLECTIVELY BARGAIN  
HB 5069AN ACT CONCERNING LOW WAGE EMPLOYERS

On behalf of 10,000 active and retired UAW members across Connecticut, we urge your support for SB 32, HB 5066 and HB 5069. Each of these bills promotes economic equality and will help build an economic infrastructure that supports Connecticut's working families.

### **SB 32**

We applaud Governor Malloy and the legislative leadership in the House and Senate for proposing to raise the state's minimum wage progressively from \$8.70 to \$10.10 over the next 4 years.

This proposal recognizes that the minimum wage - an important indicator of where to set the floor for wages in our state - must grow with the economy. Workers cannot live on the minimum wage, however, yet it is largely recognized that a wage floor is needed to support a growing economy. Even at \$10.10 we have a long way to go. According to the Economic Policy Institute's Family Budget Calculator, a worker with one child working full time in the Hartford metro area would have to earn \$28.19 per hour to meet his/her family's basic expenses. That said, we are pleased with this proposal and urge its passage.

### **HB 5069**

Another economically sound proposal, HB 5069 calls out the poverty inducing practices of big box stores and fast food companies whose profits are astronomical, CEO pay unprecedented, and worker's wages stagnant. Currently, CT taxpayers subsidize large wealthy employers like Walmart, McDonalds and others because the wages they pay are so low that their employees qualify for public assistance programs like SNAP, Medicaid and HUSKY. This proposal would require these employers to pay their workers a standard wage as determined by the Department of Labor or pay a quarterly fee to the state to support its public assistance programs.

**A few relevant facts that support the need for HB 5069:**

- Last year, Walmart made \$17 billion in profits, McDonalds made \$5.46 billion, and Yum! Brands made \$1.59 billion.
- The median hourly wage for frontline fast food workers is just \$9.27 an hour in the Hartford metro area. Consequently many workers qualify for programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, and the Earned Income Tax Credit – all taxpayer subsidized programs.
- A recent study by researchers at the UC Berkeley Center for Labor Research and Education found that the fast food industry costs American taxpayers nearly \$7 billion annually because its jobs pay such low wages that 52 percent of fast food workers—even those who work full time--are forced to enroll their families in public assistance programs, compared to 25 percent of the workforce as a whole.

This is a fair proposal designed to hold large employers accountable to the state, taxpayers and their employees. We urge its passage.

### HB5066

HB 5066 gives more employees the right to collective bargaining thefor their working conditions, wages and benefits including agricultural workers and probate court employees. Creating a fair and equitable economy must include the right of all workers to form a union and collectively bargain over their working conditions.

Agricultural workers for example do not currently have the right to collectively bargain for better wages and benefits, yet they work very hard for very little compensation. As for probate court employees, there are about 350 in all. They are not state employees by statute and therefore don't have the right to collective bargaining. As a result they are paid less than state employees who work in the judicial branch in similar jobs, pay 20% more for their healthcare and are considered "at will" employees. This bill would give them collective bargaining rights as if they were state employees - something they want but most are afraid to speak publicly because they have no job protections.

Being in a union and having the right to collectively bargain is one of the only economic vehicles whose sole purpose is to level the playing field for all workers. No worker should be without the right to collective bargaining, yet we are living in a time when workers are losing ground dramatically in large part because the political tides are against workers having rights at work. Connecticut has been in the forefront of improving and enhancing worker's rights, not suppressing them. We strongly urge passage of this bill.