

February 17, 2014

Testimony for SB No. 32

To the Members of the CT Labor and Public Employee Committee,

I am writing on behalf of workers who make minimum wage and those who make above minimum wage as I have been in both positions. I can honestly say that raising the current wage to the suggested \$10.10 is a step in a direction our state and country needs to take in order to begin to restore the enormous gap in wealth and prosperity in our economy.

For those who argue that the point of a low wage is to incentivize initiative to work one's way up, consider that most decent paying jobs require a degree. For those who cannot afford college or who have to sacrifice going to college to raise a family, service/restaurant positions are what are left in this country. Most other "traditional" blue collar jobs (i.e. manufacturing) have been exported and outsourced.

Now, working at KFC is where you work if you exist within the cycle of poverty and lack of education. Just because someone cannot fit college (and the debt that now comes with it) into their life, does not mean we, as a society, should condemn them to live in poverty. If they show up to work and do their job, they should be paid enough to provide for themselves.

The suggested \$10.10/hr is hardly a wage that enables one to lavish themselves with unnecessary frivolities but it could be the difference between going to a food pantry or buying food from a store. I, myself, have struggled to pay rent and afford car repairs and have even swallowed my pride and received food donations from a local pantry.

A final point. When you pay a better wage, you keep workers longer and you train new people less. The extra difference will inevitably go right back into the economy as the people who need this wage increase the most are most definitely not putting money into stock portfolios. They are going out and buying their kids new clothes and patronizing the very establishments they, themselves, are employed.

Let's set an example here in Connecticut and raise the wage to \$10.10. If CEO's get bonuses and raises, our poorest workers should at least have some much needed weight lifted off their weary shoulders.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Johanna Hibbs
Resident of Stafford Springs, CT 06076