

Testimony of Tom Swan, Executive Director, CT Citizen Action Group (CAG)

February 18, 2014

Before the Labor and Public Employees Committee

In Support of SB32, HB5066, and HB5069

Good Afternoon, Representative Tercyak, Senator Osten and other members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee; my name is Tom Swan and I am testifying on behalf of over 20,000 member families of CCAG: CT Citizen Action Group. I want to thank you for having the hearing today and for proposing what should be a consensus approach for building a stronger middle class.

SB 32

CCAG applauds Governor Malloy for proposing SB 32: AAC Working Families Wages to raise CT's minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour by 2017 as a good start. With Governor Malloy's leading Republican opponent stating that this is a reasonable level for a minimum wage in CT, with the former publisher of the American Conservative pushing a ballot initiative in California to raise the minimum wage to \$12 an hour because he recognizes that low wages really are just in subsidies for large profitable companies, and with our recent history increasing the minimum where the sky has not fallen as opponents claimed it would are all additional reasons why you should do the right thing and pass this bill.

HB 5069

HB5069 AAC Low Wage Employers is a common sense approach to make sure that CT begins to stop the subsidization of profitable large businesses low wages. Recent OLR reports on HUSKY Employers (2011-R-0263, July 22, 2011) show that companies like Walmart and McDonald's have the largest number of employees on the state HUSKY health plan. A recent report from the CT Association for Human Services shows how two people working at these jobs would still have a family of four eligible for tens of thousands of dollars in public programs and another done by Congressman George Miller's office found that each Walmart store that is opened costs taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars in subsidies for their low wages. Furthermore, many of these companies actually publicized the fact that they were going to cut their employees hours in order to force them to go onto public health care programs instead of fulfilling their responsibility to help cover them after the adoption of the Affordable Care Act.

This bill gives these large, profitable companies a choice: either pay their employees what the Department of Labor determines is the standard wage for this class of employees or pay a small hourly fee to the state. This will either result in an increase in pay and therefore less of a need to utilize public programs and/or a new equitable funding stream to pay for these programs that so many of our families need. The choice here is clear: Will we stand with CT's families or will you stand with the Walton family.

HB 5066

CCAG supports HB5066 Certain Workers Right to Collectively Bargain. CCAG believes the right to organize is a fundamental human right and we recognize that union membership has been one of the most important building blocks of our middle class. Granting these workers the right to organize will provide these workers with such an opportunity. Thank you for your consideration.