

Members of the Joint Committee on Labor and Public Employees:

I am the Rev. Josh Pawelek, minister of the Unitarian Universalist Society: East in Manchester, and a resident of Glastonbury. It is an honor to submit testimony in support of raising Connecticut's minimum wage to \$10.10/hour through SB 32, "An Act Concerning Working Families' Wages." I support this increase for two reasons.

First and foremost, as has been pointed out by many other proponents of this bill the average full-time minimum wage earner in Connecticut working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, earns approximately \$18,000 a year. This is simply not enough money for an individual to procure all of life's necessities (housing, food, medicine, transportation, utilities, computer access, clothing, etc.) through the course of a year in Connecticut. This is not enough money to ensure that an individual can conduct a safe and healthy life. This is certainly not enough money for an individual to engage in meaningful long-range financial planning. And if that individual has children, \$18,000 per year is a picture of economic hopelessness. It is simply not enough. Will raising the minimum wage to \$10.10/hour—an approximately \$3,000/year more in income—be enough to alter the face of poverty in Connecticut? Probably not. But it will help plug some economic holes in the lives of minimum wage workers. It is one positive step state government can take to help ease the economic burdens minimum wage workers currently face.

Second, I am persuaded by the argument that higher paid workers are more satisfied, loyal, motivated and productive. Professor Johnny Williams wrote about the data supporting this argument in a February 19th 2013 *Hartford Courant* op-ed entitled, "Higher Minimum Wage Good for Workers, Economy." While some argue that raising the minimum wage creates an unfriendly climate for business, I'm not so sure. Do we want to live in a state that is racing to the bottom in terms of wages, where low-income and minimum wage workers have less money to spend and create an ever-growing drag on government resources and services? Or do we want to live in a state where wages keep pace with inflation, where fewer workers live in poverty, and where the work-force is more motivated and productive? In my view, the latter is the more business-friendly climate. Yes, it costs businesses slightly more to have such a climate, but I suspect the extra cost pales in comparison to the costs associated with a more impoverished work-force.

Finally, I support increasing the minimum wage to \$10.10 / hour because I believe it is the right thing to do. Life is hard for minimum wage workers. As a society we ought to make it our priority to do whatever we can realistically do to ease the burdens of the most vulnerable. Raising the minimum wage is one of those things we can realistically do.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Joshua Mason Pawelek