

Testimony of Tom Swan

Executive Director of the CT Citizen Action Group (CCAG)

Before the Labor and Public Employees Committee

In regards to **HB 6791 AAC Workers' Wages at Large Corporations**, **SB 858 AAC Employees Who Customarily and Regularly Receive Gratuities and the Minimum Fair Wage**, **HB 6784 AAC Paid Sick Leave**, **HB 6932 AAC Paid Family Medical Leave**, and **HB 6933 AAC Predictable Scheduling for Employees**

March 5, 2015

Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak, and other members of the Labor Committee, my name is Tom Swan and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Citizen Action Group (CCAG). On behalf of CCAG member families I want to applaud you for offering a broad array of family friendly proposals that will strengthen our state and our economy.

The first bill I want to talk about is **HB 6791 AAC Workers' Wages at Large Corporations**. Last summer we released a report with the Alliance for a Just Society entitled Families Out of Balance. It found that a single adult needs to earn \$19.08 an hour to make it in Connecticut. While CT. took a good step in increasing our minimum wage last year, we have seen numerous municipalities and corporations far exceed our gains – even Aetna announced a corporation wide minimum wage of \$16 an hour.

HB 6791 incentivizes large, profitable corporations to pay their employees \$15 an hour or to pay a small fee. In Connecticut we do not want to see people freeze during our harsh winters, or the children of our workers go hungry to school, or employers unable to hire workers due to a lack of transportation and childcare options, or to see family members die from a lack of health care, or for businesses not to locate here due to public safety concerns or a poor public education system. Unfortunately, too many large, profitable corporations base their business model on an ability to externalize these costs off to middle class taxpayers by paying their workers so little. This bill gives these large employers the option to increase their workers' pay or to help offset the costs of their low wages in a fairer manner.

CCAG also supports **HB 6784 AAC Paid Sick Leave**. Connecticut's first in the nation Paid Sick Leave legislation has been a smashing success and the sky did not fall as opponents claimed. HB 6784 is a reasonable next step to strengthen the protections for families in CT.

SB 858 AAC Employees Who Customarily and Regularly Receive Gratuities and the Minimum Fair Wage is another bill we support and strongly urge its passage. It is a basic issue of fairness and workers should not be asked to base their livelihood on the generosity of others. Gratuities should be gratuities and not base pay. New York's recent movement on this front should help spur action here.

CCAG urges passage of **HB 6932 AAC Paid Family Medical Leave**. We will hear many of the same arguments made by opponents that we heard when the FMLA was originally passed. It is clear that they were not grounded in reality then and we are confident that expanding these protections will not only prove to be good for families, but good for our state as a whole as it has proven to be for so many economies in Europe.

While we support other bills on today's agenda, the last bill I want to speak of our support on today is **HB 6933 AAC Predictable Scheduling for Employees**. I would argue the fact that even Walmart announced to its shareholders that it was moving away from its abusive scheduling practices should prove that this bill is not only good for our families, but is also good for business.

Thanks you for your consideration.