



Connecticut Working Families Organization  
30 Arbor Street, Hartford, CT 06106  
[workingfamilies.org/connecticut](http://workingfamilies.org/connecticut)  
(860) 523-1699

March 3rd, 2016

Testimony from Lindsay Farrell, Connecticut state director of the Working Families Organization in SUPPORT of **HB5237** AAC Fair Chance Employment, **HB5370** AAC Increasing the Minimum Fair Wage, **HB5371** AAC a Minimum Workweek for Persons Performing Building Maintenance Services, and **HB5378** AAC the Standard Rate of Wages.

Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak, Senator Huang, Representative Rutigliano and the members of the Appropriations Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of these important bills. As we are all becoming acutely aware, inequality is ballooned in the country and in the state in particular over the last few decades. Since the 2008 crash, here in Connecticut we have added back almost all the jobs that were lost (we would have added back all of them if not for attrition and the decimation of our public sector), but those jobs are now low-wage service sector positions instead of middle-class salaried jobs with decent pay and benefits.

Working Families supports HB5370 to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. The cost of living in this state is incredibly high, and we need to make it possible for all families in Connecticut to support themselves with dignity. Low wage workers keep our economy running; they serve our food, care for our children and elderly, keep our stores stocked and functioning, clean our offices, schools and hospitals, and do so much more for our society. They deserve better.

We also cannot afford to keep paying workers so little when productivity is so high. Poverty wages cost taxpayers when working families are forced to rely on public assistance. Low wages hurt our small businesses when local families don not have disposable income to spend at them. It's also bad for our tax base, when workers are paid so little that they are not contributing.

\$15 per hour is the new standard, from Seattle to fast food workers in New York State. Anything less is inadequate, and we cannot continue to just try and chip away at poverty, we need to attack it head on with a living wage.

Working Families would like to encourage the committee add to this bill what SB39 does and eliminate the minimum wage carve-out for workers who sometimes receive tips. Tips

are an unreliable source of income that makes low wage workers, especially women, even more vulnerable. Lets solve both these problems with one strong bill.

We would also like to testify in support of HB5237 for fair chance employment. We all know that low-income people and people of color are more likely to get a criminal record because of an unjust, prejudiced criminal justice system. Allowing employers to easily discriminate against potential employees because of a criminal record only codifies this continued injustice.

Removing barriers for job applicants is also just smart policy. It reduces recidivism, because people have more options for building a life after release, which saves dollars and gives our state more security. Also, making it easier for people to find jobs increases the state's economic activity, growing our consumer spending and our tax base.

Lastly, we would like to support HB5371 and HB5378 because the service workers in our buildings deserve security and financial stability.

Thank you for your consideration of these bills, and we hope that the committee will pass them all.