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Ms. Kelsey S. Barringham
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SUPPORT for House Bill 5370, AN ACT INCREASING THE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE

To: The Hon. Edwin A. Gomes, Co-Chairman, The Hon. Peter A. Tercyak, Co-Chairman, The Hon. Catherine A. Osten, Vice Chairman, The Hon. Louis P. Esposito, Vice Chairman, The Hon. Tony Hwang, Ranking Member, The Hon. David Rutigliano, Ranking Member, and the members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee

Good Afternoon Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Kelsey Barringham, I am a resident of Hartford Connecticut and a student at the University of Connecticut in the School of Social Work. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to discuss raising the minimum wage in Connecticut to be closer to an actual living wage. I am in support of House Bill 5370 because increasing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2022 is a step in the right direction for strengthening the economy and recognizing the human rights of workers.

The minimum wage in Connecticut, and across the country, has not kept up with inflation and the rising cost of living. This means that many full-time workers earning minimum wage still need to rely on government programs for assistance because they are unable to make enough money from their employment to provide for themselves and their families. While many people believe minimum wage workers are mostly teenagers trying to earn pocket change, the reality is that the majority of minimum wage workers are over the age of 21, and need to be able to make enough money to support themselves.

Many have warned against increasing the minimum wage, claiming it will destroy jobs and burden small businesses. However, there are examples of communities from many different parts of the country where small businesses have thrived when they have raised their minimum wages. Seattle is one such example. Many were sure that the restaurant industry would be decimated by the new minimum wage, but in fact, many restaurant owners are actually now happy about the change because of the increase in productivity that they experienced from workers who are no longer struggling as hard to make ends meet. While some jobs are immediately lost as the local economies adapt to wage changes, these job losses tend to be far fewer than most predictions. However, putting additional money in the hands of members of the middle and working classes, the classes most likely to go out and spend their income, has a positive long term economic impact because businesses tend to be able to adapt without needing to dramatically increase prices. As a state, we need to focus less on job quantity, and more on job quality. If our goal of achieving low unemployment means we still have residents unable to afford the cost of living, and unable to pay the taxes we need to support our state, we are working on achieving the wrong goal.

While some measures say that we truly need a minimum wage of over \$19 in order to afford to live in Connecticut, increasing the minimum wage to \$15 is still a step in the right direction. In the long term, we should also ensure that the minimum wage increases automatically with inflation, but for now recognizing that increasing the minimum wage is beneficial to the economy and to workers is important for making the changes needed to better help all Connecticut residents to achieve a more equitable standard of living.