

Testimony of Tom Swan, Executive Director Connecticut Citizen Action Group (CCAG)

Before the Labor and Public Employees Committee

In support of SB 39 AAC THE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE AND EMPLOYEES WHO CUSTOMARILY AND REGULARLY RECEIVE GRATUITIES, HB 5237 AAC CONCERNING FAIR CHANCE EMPLOYMENT, and HB 5370 AA INCREASING THE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE

March 3, 2016

Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak and other members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee, my name is Tom Swan and I am the Executive Director of the CT Citizen Action Group. I want to thank you for your continued leadership in protecting working families in Connecticut. On behalf of our member families there are a number of bills that I want to testify in support of today.

The first bill is SB 39 AAC THE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE AND EMPLOYEES WHO CUSTOMARILY AND REGULARLY RECEIVE GRATUITIES. CCAG believes that Connecticut needs to end the discriminatory practice of paying workers who often receive gratuities less of a wage than other workers. Due to the fact that so many of these workers are women who work in the restaurant industry, failure to change this legislatively will be perpetuating pay inequity for a large number of women. Seven states do not allow for these workers to be discriminated against, it has been good for working families and for the restaurant industry in these states. We urge you to join the growing number of states and fix this discriminatory practice.

The second piece of legislation I would like to discuss today is HB 5237 AAC CONCERNING FAIR CHANCE EMPLOYMENT. Connecticut has been a leader in reforming our criminal justice system and this bill is a necessary next step. Not only will this legislation help grow our economy, keep families together and significantly reduce recidivism, it is the morally right thing to do. People deserve second chances and this bill will give more people an opportunity to take advantage of those chances.

I also want to lend our support for and HB 5370 AA INCREASING THE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE. CCAG strongly supports raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. CCAG believes that people who work full time should not have to worry about making ends meet. Seattle has found that since they voted to move to \$ 15 an hour their economy has improved, jobs have become more plentiful and the demands on public programs has decreased. I realize that there will be voices that include a Koch Brothers' front group who will rehash arguments that have been used since passage of the first minimum wage law and laws that ended child labor. They were wrong then and they are wrong now. The problem is not what they and Donald Trump say about our wages being too high. It is people's wages are too low and the Donald Trump's of the world are taking too much. Connecticut needs to reject this flat earth view of the world and make work pay by passing HB 5370.

Thank you