



Committee on Labor and Public Employees
February 16, 2017

Testimony on
SB 1 An Act Creating a Paid Family Leave System in Connecticut
HB 5591 An Act Concerning Pay Equity in the Workplace
HB 6208 An Act Increasing the Minimum Wage

Good afternoon, Senator Gomes, Senator Miner, Representative Porter and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Lucy Nolan and I am the executive director of End Hunger Connecticut!, a statewide anti-hunger and food security advocacy, outreach and education organization. I am here today to lend our support to SB 1 An Act Creating a Paid Family Leave System in Connecticut, HB 5591 An Act Concerning Pay Equity in the Workplace, HB 6208 An Act Increasing the Minimum Wage.

SB 1 An Act Creating a Paid Family Leave System in Connecticut

End Hunger Connecticut! is a nonprofit with a small budget. We vary in staff from five to twelve people. We employ several people for our SNAP Call Center, as outreach specialists and who assist with applying for SNAP. We also work in the community and in schools expanding federal nutrition programs for summer meals and school breakfast. We have a small budget and a lot of work.

We have had a paid family leave policy since our inception in 1998, which allows for 6 weeks paid leave and the possibility for an additional 12 weeks unpaid leave with benefits remaining in place. I'm happy to say that EHC! is the happy organizational parent of four children since 2004, whose mothers took advantage of our policy. I personally used it when my mother was hospitalized at various times and when she was dying. Our staff is secure in knowing that if there is an emergency or a new child arriving in the lives their jobs, benefits and salary is secure.

During the time the staffer is gone others of us must pick up their work and it can be difficult for some staff. However, when each staff person comes back to work their work product is excellent and they feel comfortable coming back to work after spending the necessary time with their loved one. The cost has not been insurmountable and is well worth it considering the benefit is a staff person, who knows the job well and is both physically and mentally ready to work and happy and committed to the organization .

HB 5591 An Act Concerning Pay Equity in the Workplace

HB 6208 An Act Increasing the Minimum Wage

Connecticut's food insecurity rate is 13.9%. While food insecurity affects men and women of all ages, it largely impacts women and children; 19.2%, or 1 in 5 of households with children headed by women and 15.3%, or 1 in 6 women living alone without children faced food insecurity in 2014. Much higher than the average overall. Interestingly, while 19.2% of households with children were food insecure, only

9.4% of households with children had food insecure children--suggesting that parents are foregoing their own needs to protect their children.¹

We know that when there are not enough dollars in the household budget food is often the last to be paid.

Additionally, we know that participation in nutrition programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP formally Food Stamps), school meals like breakfast and suppers, and summer meals have increased significantly and we are reaching more people, yet when food insecurity was last measured Connecticut's rate had a slight increase, and our poverty rate has not changed. Women are twice as likely to use SNAP at one point in their lives and many single-family households are headed by women therefore wages need to be equal and higher for women. We want people to succeed and the biggest way to have that happen is through equal and adequate pay.

End Hunger Connecticut! supports these bills, and urges their passage.

Thank you.

¹ America's Health Rankings 2016; http://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/2016-health-of-women-and-children-report/measure/food_insecurity_household/state/CT