

TO: Honorable Members of the Labor & Public Employees Committee

FROM: Wendy Traub, Hemlock Directional Boring, Inc. and Member of NFIB CT Leadership Council

RE: HB 5591 An Act Concerning Pay Equity In The Workplace; SB 1 & HB 6212 Paid Family and Medical Leave; SB 13 & HB 6208 Minimum Wage

DATE: February 16, 2017

Honorable Senator Gomes, Senator Miner, Representative Porter and Committee Members,

I am writing to you today in reference to HB 5591 concerning pay equity in the workplace. My husband and I own a small, specialized construction company in Northwest Connecticut. While we understand that there is an overall concern in our country when it comes to pay gaps and pay equality, I would like to urge you not to bring forward such broad, sweeping legislation that does not take into consideration the many reasons a private employer may decide to offer different pay to different employees in similar jobs.

Our company predominately hires construction laborers. In our 23 years of being in business, we have hired hundreds of employees of all ages and backgrounds. When considering their starting wage, things such as years of experience, special certifications, holding a CDL license, knowledge of hydraulics, equipment operating experience and other individual qualifications are examined.

We are a non-union corporation, but are subject to prevailing wage laws when we work on State or Federally funded projects. In those instances, we do pay the same to all employees in a specific job classification, as required. There is a unique quality, however, to being able to open a small, independent business in the State of Connecticut. As such, we feel that employers should have the opportunity to offer their employees what is not only fair to them, but what is reasonable to the company. When the legislature wants to control that aspect of a private business, we believe it undermines our ability to run our businesses and pushes small businesses to take on a union-based approach to paying wages.

Enacting pay equity to such an extent does not allow an employer to grant an employee a performance raise without extending that raise to all in the same category of work. It may also open up small businesses to countless wage hearings or lawsuits in which the owner would have to prove that the positions weren't exactly comparable. Passing this bill would add another layer to already over-burdened, over-regulated small businesses.

I would be remiss to not also express disapproval of any legislation that creates a state-run Paid Family Medical Leave Plan (SB 1 and HB 6212). In the past, these proposed bills unfairly mandated employee participation (unless they contained an opt out) and while they start with an employee-only pay deduction, history lends itself to believe that if the fund cannot sustain itself, employer matches will become a reality.

If the State of Connecticut is genuinely serious about being "business friendly", I suggest that the legislature turn its focus to those types of issues that would actually support that term. Small businesses need tax relief, freedom from excessive government oversight, reductions in fees, lower fuel costs, and the ability to make their own decisions on how to best accommodate their employees. Enforcing an unsustainable higher minimum wage of \$15 per hour for all small businesses (SB 13 & HB 6208), creating additional employee benefits or attempting to arrive at pay equity through a forced wage structure may just be the nails that close the coffin on thousands of small businesses in this wonderful state as we also struggle with continually rising property taxes because of changes in State funding to our municipalities.

I am urging your committee not to support HB 5591, SB 1 & HB6212, and SB 13 & HB 6208, and to furthermore not consider any legislation that further ties the hands of small businesses here in Connecticut.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.