

Testimony of Stacey Zimmerman SEIU CT State Council

2/16/2017

Support:

Proposed S.B. No. 1 AN ACT CREATING A PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE SYSTEM IN THE STATE. (LAB)

S.B. No. 13 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING THE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE. (LAB)

H.B. No. 6208 (COMM) AN ACT INCREASING THE MINIMUM WAGE.

Proposed H.B. No. 6212 AN ACT CREATING A PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE SYSTEM IN THE STATE.

Proposed H.B. No. 6901 AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOUPMENT OF STATE COSTS ATTRIBUTABLE TO LOW WAGE EMPLOYERS.

Proposed H.B. No. 6914 AN ACT CONCERNING A MINIMUM WORK WEEK FOR PERSONS PERFORMING JANITORIAL OR BUILDING MAINTENANCE SERVICES.

Proposed H.B. No. 5591 AN ACT CONCERNING PAY EQUITY IN THE WORKFORCE.

Oppose:

Proposed H.B. No. 5149 AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN MINIMUM FAIR WAGE PROVISIONS.

Chairman Porter, Gomes, Miner and distinguished members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify here today. My name is Stacey Zimmerman; I am here today representing the Service Employees International Union Connecticut State Council the state's largest labor union with over 65,000 members.

The storm of last week was somewhat fortuitous, as now we have an opportunity to have a hearing on a package of proposals that have the potential to propel Connecticut into the future. The ability to work a day for a fair wage and have the ability to take time when needed for family leave will start to bring the Connecticut workforce on par with our neighboring states and the rest of the world.

Connecticut has extreme income inequality – second in the country, behind only New York, and New York recognizing this have implemented a path to \$15 an hour and passed a paid family leave program. Our neighboring states are on a path to create a more just environment for the working people of the region and Connecticut faces the very real problem of being left behind.

Minimum wage workers are not primarily teenagers earning pocket money. Over 30 percent of all workers in Connecticut earn less than \$15 per hour; these workers are disproportionately female, Black,

and Latino, and nearly one-third of them have children. Ninety percent of the workers who would benefit from a \$15 minimum wage are adults, over the age of 20.

Raising the minimum wage to \$15 will have many benefits for Connecticut's workers, businesses, and taxpayers, and an overall positive effect on the economy, as low-wage workers with more money in their pockets will spend it to support their families, expanding the economy and helping businesses to grow.

In a time when we are seeing an out migration of young people raising wages and increasing the ability for young families to have the time they need to address life's challenges, Connecticut can start to reverse this trend.

- Nearly 40% of millennials say they would move to another country for better parental leave benefits.

SEIU strongly believes that Healthy Families help produce a Healthy Economy and the fundamental building blocks are Economic Security and Job Security. These two concepts being heard today are a great start in establishing an economy that works for everyone.