

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Ned Lamont

Concerning

S.B. 1 An Act Concerning Earned Family and Medical Leave

S.B. 15 An Act Concerning Fair and Equal pay for Equal Work

H.B. 5043 An Act Promoting A Fair, Civil and Harassment-Free Workplace

H.B. 5044 An Act Concerning Fair Treatment of Sick Workers

H.B. No. 5386 An Act Concerning Various Pay Equity And Fairness Matters

H.B. 5387 An Act Concerning Paid Family Medical Leave

H.B. 5388 An Act Concerning A Fair Minimum Wage

March 8, 2018

Senator Gomes, Senator Miner, Representative Porter, Representative Bocchino and Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee:

Thank you for raising this legislation and for the opportunity to express my support. This work is especially meaningful today, International Women's Day, as we pause to reflect on how we can improve our society to build up and create opportunity for women.

I offer my testimony to you today as a father, a husband, a businessman and a proud citizen of Connecticut. The proposed bills being heard today strive to make Connecticut a state where everyone can benefit from economic opportunity, provide for their families and feel secure in their workplace.

Creating a \$15 minimum wage is an important step in improving the quality of life for working families across Connecticut, and I believe it will boost wages across the board. In this modern economy, workers have never been more productive, yet wages are stagnant. As cost of living rises and our economy continues to transition, I believe a \$15 minimum wage will ensure that working families can thrive in our state. Building up our middle class is good for our families and our economy.

Increasing the minimum wage to \$15 is also a tool that will help close the wage gap between men and women in our state. More than 60% of minimum wage workers in Connecticut are women, and a significant population of those women are women of color. In our state Latinas and Black women make 47¢ and 58¢ respectively for every \$1.00 paid to white, non-Hispanic men. This disparity is even more troubling when coupled with the reminder that more than 170,000 households in Connecticut are headed by women. Median annual income for single female-headed households in Connecticut with children under eighteen is \$30,795, while the same for single male-headed households with children under eighteen is \$45,986. That's a difference that

puts single mothers behind single fathers in their ability to pay for childcare, cover tuition fees, put food on the table, pay the mortgage or cover their rent.

Equal pay for equal work can also contribute to ending Connecticut's fiscal woes. Annually, women who are employed full time in Connecticut lose a combined total of \$15 billion to the wage gap.

Paying workers fairly is also important to the culture of a company. When someone is treated unfairly that impacts morale across the workplace and reduces productivity.

As someone who has spent most of my career starting up and running small businesses, I know how important it is to a workplace that you do not lose a great member of the team because they are faced with a personal crisis. Her leaving the workplace is bad for her, and it's bad for business. Paid family and medical leave is the right thing to do, and the smart thing to do.

The legislation offered proposes creative solutions that will increase the number of workers in our state who will have access to paid family and medical leave. This will make us a more attractive state to modern workers. According to a study done by the Connecticut Campaign for Paid Family Leave "more than 38% of millennial workers said that they would not only move state's but move to another country for better parental benefits."

Paid Family and Medical Leave is an important investment morally. Workers in Connecticut should not have to choose between spending the first days with their child, the last days with their parent or paying their mortgage.

And finally, I fully support the steps offered in the proposed legislation to create workplaces free from harassment. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "It may true that the law cannot change the heart but it can restrain the heartless." The power of the #MeToo movement and the courage of women everywhere who have stood up and spoken out about sexual harassment has begun to change hearts, it is our responsibility to make sure that we restrain the heartless.

Thank you for your consideration. I strongly urge your support.