

**Testimony of Pastor AJ
Senior Pastor, Urban Refuge Church**

**Labor & Public Employees Committee
March 7, 2019**

**SB 2 An Act Increasing the Minimum Fair Wage/ HB 5004 An Act Increasing the Minimum
Fair Wage**

Thank you to the Committee of Labor and Public Employees for holding this hearing today. My name is Pastor AJ and I am the Senior Pastor at Urban Refuge Church. I'm here to testify in support of working families and to lend my voice to their struggle for dignity, respect, and a decent life.

I invite you to join me in this fight by supporting the pro-worker and pro-family policies before you today. In particular, I urge you to support SB 2/HB 5004, An Act Increasing the Minimum Fair Wage. This bill will raise the minimum wage in our state from \$10.10 to \$15/hour by 2022. There is too much poverty and inequality in Connecticut and I urge you to do everything within your power to usher-in commonsense solutions to address the hardships that low-income and working families face.

Childhood poverty in Connecticut continues to hover at about 15% statewide, yet when you take a closer look the cities of Hartford and New Haven the childhood poverty rates are double and triple that rate respectively.¹ Not only do we see disparities between our cities' childhood poverty rates, Connecticut's families of color and white families are for the most part living very different realities. Black families earn a median household income of \$44,418 and Latino families earn a median household income of \$42,371. White families, however, have a median household income of \$81,324.²

The minimum wage disproportionately impacts workers of color, who are overrepresented in low-wage jobs that do not fair wages. While African American and Hispanic workers make up 26% of the state workforce, almost one-third (33.1%) of them would benefit from an increase in the minimum wage. More than 37% of African American and Hispanic women would directly benefit. This level of poverty for our children and disparities between families is an outrage and a shame.

¹ "Childhood Poverty by Geography," accessed at:
<https://public.tableau.com/profile/connecticut.voices.for.children#!/vizhome/AmericanCommunitySurvey1-YearEstimates/ACS1-YearEstimates>

² "Median Household Income by Race," accessed at:
<https://public.tableau.com/profile/connecticut.voices.for.children#!/vizhome/AmericanCommunitySurvey1-YearEstimates/ACS1-YearEstimates>

Too many people are forced to get by on too little. Families need a raise. By increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, CT families will be not being living in luxury; rather, it will be an important first step on the path towards a middle-class life for many in our state.

Please do your part to alleviate poverty by passing SB 2/HB 5004, An Act Increasing the Minimum Fair Wage, out of Committee today. Thank you for your time.