

March 7, 2019

Dear Esteemed Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee,

I write in support of SB 2/HB 5004: An Act to Raise the Minimum Fair Wage. I am a resident of Manchester, CT and am currently a PhD candidate at the University of Connecticut's School of Social Work. I am a social worker with 20 years of experience in community organizing, education and program management, and have spent many of these years working in low-income communities.

The United Way of Connecticut publishes an ALICE report, which I'm sure many of you are familiar with. ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. It is distressing to read that 40% of Connecticut residents fall into this ALICE category (United Way, 2018). I am extremely concerned with the rampant economic inequality that exists globally, nationally and in our state. The ALICE report also contains a realistic family sustaining budget. In Connecticut, a family of four requires a household income of over \$75,000 to sustain a healthy family and save moderately for an emergency (United Way, 2018). Minimum wage and low-wage workers would need to work close to 150 hours/week to attain a family sustaining budget in Connecticut in 2019. With so many constraints on upward mobility, we need to raise the minimum wage significantly so that low-wage workers can also afford to feed and shelter their families without needing to work an inhuman number of hours to get by. Nationally, 40% of families do not have \$400 in savings available in case of emergency- imagine your transmission goes. How will you get to and from work? Your spouse or child is diagnosed with a serious illness. Can you afford the out of pocket expenses that accrue quickly? This is an unacceptable in a developed nation with an annual GDP close to \$20 trillion (World Bank, 2017).

As a social worker and as a human being, I am concerned with the health and well-being of families in our state. I understand that the social determinants of health, including access to family sustaining wages, have a powerful impact on health outcomes and quality of life for everyone in our communities (World Health Organization, 2018). Access to a living wage is critical for families and individuals to have the capacity to access healthy housing, quality education, nutritious foods, safe transportation and opportunities for upward mobility that are severely lacking across the nation. While \$15/hour still does not represent a full family-sustaining wage, it does bring our families much closer to sustainability. I only wish we could get there sooner! I strongly support every effort to raise the minimum wage to a family sustaining wage so that we can thrive together.

Sincerely,

Angela Bellas, MSW, PhD Candidate
University of Connecticut School of Social Work
Resident- Manchester, CT