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Calixto Cornejo
Member of 32BJ SEIU, Cleaner at Landmark Square, Stamford

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

- Good afternoon members of the committee. Thank you for hearing my testimony in support of raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour by passing SB 2 and HB 5004.
- My name is Calixto Cornejo. I work full-time as a janitor in a building in Stamford where I make \$15.50 an hour.
- It's a demanding job, where I have to clean a lot of bathrooms. But I was very happy to take this job a few years ago and leave the mailroom at UBS bank, where I made the minimum wage of \$10.10 an hour.
- I cannot say strongly enough how much of a difference this difference in a basic wage has meant for me. I live with my wife and a young grandson. When we first came to this country he was only six years old. At that time, my wife had trouble finding work. All we could afford was a single room apartment, where the three of us slept. I had to take the bus everywhere, which made my activities outside work very difficult, especially the time I volunteered as a soccer coach.
- When I left that job, I started with my union cleaning job at \$13.60 an hour, and my contract with my union, 32BJ, guaranteed me wage increases. Now, I am able to afford a simple but reliable car. We were able to move into a slightly better apartment, so my grandson

now, at age 13, can have his own room. It has made a tremendous difference in the dignity of my family life.

- I was fortunate to find my union job, but over 300,000 men and women in Connecticut work for the minimum wage. They have the same troubles I had. You could help transform their lives like mine was by the passage of SB 2 and HB 5004.
- For older workers especially, people with grandchildren like me, it is asking a lot to pretend that in time our situation will change and that the minimum is just a “starting” wage. We need to think of the minimum as a base, one that is livable on its own. That is what I have now, and that is what all workers deserve. Thank you.