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www.seiu32bj.org

**Testimony before the Labor and Public Employees Committee
Connecticut General Assembly
Thursday, March 7, 2019**

**Martha Duque
Cleaner at New Britain Court House and Member of 32BJ SEIU**

- Good afternoon members of the committee. I'm proud to be here to speak in favor of raising the minimum wage by supporting SB 2 An Act Increasing the Minimum Fair Wage and HB 5004 An Act Raising the Minimum Fair Wage.
- My name is Martha Duque. I am a janitor at the New Britain Courthouse and a member of 32BJ SEIU. As part of our union, my coworkers and I fight for decent wages and benefits. Now we earn just over \$15 an hour. It isn't a lot, but together with my husband's salary, we can save a little, and I was able to help my youngest son, Sebastián, go to college at UConn.
 - He graduated two years ago and now makes good money working in computer science.
 - When I first came to this country to be with my three sons in 1999, I was not married, and I was earning only \$6 an hour working at a bakery.
 - Back then, I couldn't help my oldest son go to college. At 17, Fernando had to help us by getting a job painting, cleaning, doing whatever he could to help us get by. We didn't make enough to even dream of college.
 - I managed to escape that life, but I was lucky. I met a good man. Not everyone has this luck.
 - The majority of minimum wage earners are women, like me. They are adults, like me. A third of them have children, like I did. Raising their salaries to \$15 an hour would give them a chance to improve their lives and their children's lives. This isn't about luck, it's about fighting inequality. It's about real economic opportunity.
 - At 37, Fernando is only going to college now. He is not angry. He feels lucky too. But we can do better as a state for women and their children than just letting them hope and pray that they get lucky too. We can start by passing a \$15 minimum wage. Thank you.