

Deanna Keller
Windsor, CT
Labor & Public Employees Committee
March 7, 2019
S.B. 1 and H.B. 5004 An Act Increasing the Minimum Wage

My name is Deanna Keller and I live in Windsor. I'm here to testify in favor of S.B. 1 and H.B. 5004 An Act Increasing the Minimum Wage.

I'm currently employed as an independent contractor making \$15/hr. But for the majority of my adult life, I've worked at minimum wage jobs and for a period of time, I was homeless. I'm going to briefly share my story today.

When I was 16 years old, I was placed in the custody of DCF. I went from foster care to group homes and remained in the care of DCF while I earned my high school diploma. I have worked as an office assistant and as a floral assistant, both minimum wage jobs and I was never able to afford a place on my own. In November of 2015, I moved into an apartment. DCF paid for the rent and food for about 7-8 months. After the 7-8 months, DCF reduced the amount they paid. At this time I was working 32 hours as an office assistant making minimum wage. I was not able to pay the rent I had to cover and still be able to afford to buy food. Because I choose purchasing food over paying rent, the landlord took my security deposit, which was roughly \$1,300 and I still ending up owing \$200 when my lease was up.

In 2017, I started working at Walmart, making \$11/hr. I was living paycheck to paycheck, living in a trailer and was unable to save any money once rent and food was paid for. In May of 2018 I lost my job due to illness and I became homeless. I ended up living in a tent near Farmington river in Windsor. I was only able to get off the streets because I ended up having to be rescued by the police when my tent was surrounded by raising flood waters. The windsor Department of Social Services and members of the community donated money so I could stay in a local hotel room while trying to find a job.

Currently, I work as an independent contractor painting houses. I live with my boss while I save up enough money to be able to afford my own place. The cheapest places I've found have been \$750/month. I need to be able to save up enough money for first and last months rent as well as security deposit. There is no way I would be able to do this while still making minimum wage. Even making \$15/hr, it will still be awhile to be able to afford my own place, and that would leave me with no money to purchase furnishings. I lost everything I had when I became homeless and am now starting over from scratch. I urge you to support S.B. 1 and H.B. 5004 to allow residents of CT the ability to earn a livable wage.