

LaBonne's MARKETS

March 7, 2019

RE: Opposition to SB 002 an act increasing the minimum wage

RE: Opposition to HB 5004 an act increasing the minimum wage

RE: Opposition to HB 7191 an act increasing the minimum wage

Dear Co-chairs Senator Kushner, Representative Porter and all the members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee:

My name is Robert LaBonne Jr from LaBonne's Market's. We own 3 supermarkets in Watertown, Woodbury and Salisbury. My great, great grandfather sold meat out of his horse and buggy over 120 years ago in CT. My son Rob is 6th generation meat cutter. Not many people share this long of a family history in serving the people of CT.



Since we opened our first supermarket in 1962 we have employed over 10,000 people. Many of them it was their very first job. We currently have 335 associates working for us now and 60% of them are of high school and college age. Our industry is a training ground for entry level youths, where we teach them many of the following very important job skills and behaviors: Teamwork, customer service, discipline, accountability, communication, work ethic, personal responsibility, respect, leadership

Here is a list of other concerns that will be impacted by the increase in the minimum wage.

- This law will force employers to reduce the number of full-time people with benefits and switch over to a higher percentage of part time workers. This will then impact the state with more people on the Husky health program.
- Technology will replace some of these entry level jobs, because computers or machinery don't call in sick, they can work 24/7, don't require any benefits and reduce labor expenses.
- This increase will dramatically increase food costs in my opinion by 20-30%, because labor is our biggest expense after our cost of goods. Is the middle-class ready to pay \$6 for a gallon of milk?

- With the food costs going up because of this law, this will also affect the WIC and Snap programs.
- Workman's compensation and disability insurance will also increase based on our overall labor costs.
- Another area that will suffer is donations, when our operational costs go up, it cuts in to our ability to give back to the communities and local charities like food banks that critically rely on our financial support.
- If technology or increased labor costs increases the unemployment rates, our next generation of youths will have much more free time on their hands, especially if they aren't working. This can lead to boredom, lack of exercise, too much time playing games or on computers, potentially more crime and over all lack of contribution to themselves, their family and a community as a whole
- I highly recommend a separate learning wage group for people under 21, where very often they are not feeding or supporting a family of 4. This would still allow them time to learn all these very important job skills and then after a few years with experience they would then be eligible for the higher minimum wage.
- Lastly if this law gets approved, the food retail, restaurant, hotel and service industries cannot handle a 3-year acceleration. 6 years would be much more manageable and it would slow the increase of food and other services which would greatly impact our seniors on fixed income and those struggling to make ends meet now. I also feel tying it to a CPI will only make this change even more painful for the CT tax payers
- CT is already not competitive; my fear is this bill will force many more CT residents to leave the state and break up families from the next generation deciding to not stay here as well.

Thank you for your time today and for seriously considering all the points that I have brought up. I would be happy to meet with anyone on the committee in the future to deepen the discussion on this very important topic that will have a generational effect on the state's economy, families and businesses.

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