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Mara Morales
Member of 32BJ SEIU, Cleaner at Phoenix Life Insurance, Hartford

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. I am here to testify in support of SB 2 and HB 5004, two bills that would raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour.

- For more than 20 years, I have worked as a cleaner at the Phoenix Life Insurance in Hartford, and participated in my union, 32BJ. When I started, we only earned \$5.15 an hour. I only took home \$220 a week.

- That was a long time ago, it's true, and the cost of living was lower. But still, it was a struggle. I had three young children. My family shared an apartment with other families. We could not afford a vacation. We could barely afford to live.

- One thing I could still do was raise my voice for change. Over those two decades, I have marched with my union many, many times. We have fought hard to make a better living. I now make \$17.70 an hour.

- My husband works in a restaurant as a sous chef. We still struggle. But we have bought our own house. We raised our three children to adulthood. Now we can even afford to travel sometimes during the vacation guaranteed in my union contract.

- And now we are raising our voices for our children, for our friends, for our neighbors. Workers at my union joined together to fight for a better life. Now we have joined together with other unions, and with workers who do not have a union, to fight for a minimum wage of \$15.

- I remember how hard it was when I brought home so little money. But the cost of living has gone up much faster than the minimum wage in

this country, and Connecticut is more expensive than most places.

- Last year, we made our voices heard by voting. I am proud of working to elect many new Representatives and Senators. I hope you will all join together in this committee, so we can join our neighbors in Massachusetts and New York, and our friends in New Jersey and Illinois and California, and pass a \$15 minimum wage. Thank you.