

Ms. Brenda Morissette, Naugatuck Valley Project,  
speaking before the Labor and Public Employee Committee  
In Favor of House Bill 5639, on 3/7/2019

Good Afternoon Honorable Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. Thank you to Co-Chairwoman Representative Porter and Co-Chairwoman Senator Kushner for the opportunity to speak before you this afternoon.

I am here to speak on behalf of the Naugatuck Valley Project in favor of House Bill 5639, An Act Raising the Minimum Wage in Connecticut. We are an organization of 19 faith-based institutions, housing cooperatives, and local labor unions working together to affect positive change for people in our part of the state. Our Board has unanimously endorsed House Bill 5639.

Believe me when I tell you that the low-income working men and women of the Naugatuck Valley need a raise in the minimum wage. They are hard-working people. Currently, at \$10.10 per hour, a full-time minimum wage worker makes \$404 gross or \$1616 gross per month. Rent for a two-bedroom apartment in the Naugatuck Valley region for a family, with heat and electricity factored into the equation, was averaging about \$1,050\* per month in 2018. That is two-thirds of a minimum wage worker's monthly income! You do not have to be a rocket scientist to understand that there is not much money left - and certainly not enough - to pay for food, clothing, medical bills, toiletries, school supplies for the children, and other necessities.

We would like to thank you for including domestic workers in House Bill 5639. As you know, domestic workers have been left out of federal labor laws over the years. In Connecticut, in 2014, domestic workers were not covered by the increases in minimum wage that were legislated at that time and are still in effect today. The time has come for domestic workers in Connecticut to be covered under minimum wage laws. Again, we thank you for including them in House Bill 5639.

We must increase the minimum wage now. Connecticut is an affluent state overall. Our minimum wage workers, now and in the future, deserve the dignity and respect that an increased minimum wage will reflect. Our state must move in the direction of economic justice.

Thank you.

\*The National Low Income Housing Coalition, Out of Reach Report 2018d.