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An affiliate of the National Education Association

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Testimony of

Tom Nicholas

Connecticut Education Association

Before the Labor and Public Employees Committee

Re:

SB 2 AA Increasing the Minimum Fair Wage

HB 5004 AA Raising the Minimum Fair Wage

March 7, 2019

Good Evening Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, and distinguished members of the Labor Committee. My name is Tom Nicholas, and I am the Vice President of the Connecticut Education Association, the state's largest teachers union, representing active and retired teachers across the state.

CEA supports SB 2 and HB 5004, which ensure a minimum fair wage.

CEA supports raising the minimum wage as proposed in these bills. The bills do this by increasing minimum wages by yearly increments to a level of \$15 an hour, and then establishing a yearly adjusted minimum wage based on an increase in the consumer price index. This is fair, and wisely links minimum wages to inflation.

Our members interact with about 500,000 students every day. They recognize that so many children in their classrooms come from families who struggle to get by every day. Our members reach into their pockets to buy supplies, paper, and sometimes lunches and coats for students who cannot always afford their own. Teachers see the struggles of children whose parent or parents have to work two jobs, leaving less time to help their children do better in school. They see the struggle of older students who work to help their families make ends meet.

Parents forced to work overtime hours or multiple low-wage jobs can't spend as much time engaged in their child's education—visiting their schools, talking with their teachers, helping with homework, and cheering their kids on at games and performances.

Enacting a minimum fair wage would go a long way to ensuring that fewer children face the incredible challenges to their learning posed by poverty. It would go a long way toward enabling parents to spend more time engaged in their

children's school – attending parent-teacher conferences, helping children with their homework, or watching in joy as their child performs in a concert, or on the field.

Connecticut is a state with a high cost of living. This drives some young families out and others into poverty. Hard-working people deserve fair compensation, and by increasing the Connecticut minimum wage we can help lift families up and keep more skilled employees and talented future workers in our state.

Thank you.