

To Members of the Labor Committee:

I'm writing about the proposed increases to minimum wage. Philosophically, I do not understand why the price one is willing to accept for his/her services (e.g. wages) should be controlled by the government. Just as the free market will decide what the "right" price is for gas, bread, soda, snow plowing, automobiles, and a whole host of other goods/services; so too will it determine the appropriate cost of labor. As unemployment has decreased, we are now seeing an increase in wages that companies like Walmart are implementing.

But this is not a philosophical argument. Instead, I want to ensure the committee understands the very real impact an increase in the minimum wage will have on a minor, but important industry in Connecticut – farming. Most farming in Connecticut is either produce or dairy farming; both of which are relatively labor intensive. I am the part owner of a family dairy farm (Normandry Farm, LLC) in Griswold CT. Next to feed, labor is our biggest expense at about \$40,000 per year. If the minimum wage increases to \$15, then our costs will increase to over \$60,000 per year when taking into account increases in FICA taxes. Our farm currently operates at about a \$10K profit if all goes well (that assumes no draws for me or my sister). Add over \$20K in labor costs, and it is not possible for us to make a profit. We will most likely be forced to sell the family farm unless (1) an exemption is made for small farms or (2) the state increases aid to farms.

I recognize that farming is not the dominant industry in Connecticut it once may have been. But farming provides a certain feel and character to our state that is hard to replace once lost. We were honored as a state last year to host the Farm Aid concert which recognizes the struggles that many farms face and I am extremely appreciate of the aid the state provides (although I wish it wasn't necessary). Please know that if you decide to increase the minimum wage without any consideration for our farmers, you will change the landscape of Connecticut forever.

Thanks,
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