

Labor & Public Employees Committee
March 7, 2019
Testimony in support of SB 2 An Act Increasing the Minimum Fair Wage; and
HB 5004 An Act Increasing the Minimum Fair Wage.

Dear Senator Kushner, Representative Porter and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee.

My name is Grace O'Connor and I live in West Hartford. I am a senior at the University of Connecticut. I am writing in strong support of SB 2 An Act Increasing the Minimum Fair Wage; and HB 5004 An Act Raising the Minimum Fair Wage.

I support SB 2 and HB 5004 because it will gradually increase the minimum wage to \$15 by 2022 and then index it to inflation. As a student of Urban and Community Studies, it is clear to me that this higher minimum wage will be endlessly beneficial to the workers in Connecticut as well as the state.

In Connecticut, to maintain a basic standard of living, a full-time worker must earn \$19.08 per hour for a single adult, and \$40.48 per hour for a single adult supporting two children. It is absurd to expect the state's current \$10.10 minimum wage to be enough income for a single full-time worker, let alone a parent of young children. A single adult would need to work 75.5 hours per week to reach the basic living wage on our current minimum wage.

If Connecticut chooses to stick with the \$10.10 minimum wage, we are putting ourselves at risk for losing hard-working residents to our surrounding states like Vermont, Rhode Island, and Maine where the minimum wage is already higher in addition to an increase being considered currently. Massachusetts and New York have already passed legislation to raise their minimum wage to \$15 over time, and Connecticut must do the same to be competitive amongst our neighboring states, or we will lose our workers and potential new workers to them.

With a higher minimum wage, our state would also experience benefits to revenue and economic activity, as residents earning higher wages will be better able to support local businesses, resulting in a boost to the local economy and greater revenues in taxes. States with higher minimum wages, such as California and Washington, have lower rates of unemployment and higher rates of job creation. They have gained higher worker productivity rates, a higher employee retention rate, and an overall increase in economic activity. These benefits are enough to offset the higher cost to employers.

Society overall would benefit from minimum wage increase by means of a reduced racial pay gap, lower rates of child neglect, and better mental health for hard-working individuals. With a higher minimum wage, workers would no longer need to rely on safety services such as SNAP and housing assistance, which would save taxpayer money.

Thank you for your attention to my testimony.

Sincerely,
Grace O'Connor
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