MARCH 7, 2019
LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES 11:00 A.M.
COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING

CHAIRPERSON: Senator Julie Kushner
Representative Robyn Porter

SENATORS: Miner, Lesser, Osten

REPRESENTATIVES: Poletta, Fishbein, Hall, Luxenberg, Rutigliano, Smith, Vargas, Wilson, P.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): [Gavel] We’re gonna get started. We are going to convene this Meeting, Public Hearing of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. We have a full agenda today so we want to get started and thank all the advocates that are here today to testify and we will be starting with our elected officials list and first on that list I have, Representative Kokoruda. Excuse me, Representative. Can you take a seat and then hold on one second because we do want to make sure everyone knows what the housekeeping rules? Do we have that sheet about the exits and the entrances and all of that? We want to make sure people know how to get in and out of here. Maybe Senator Miner you wouldn’t mind reading that for us?

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Okay so in the interest of safety I would ask that you note the location of and access to the exits in this hearing room. The two doors through which you entered the room are the emergency exits and are marked with exit signs. In an emergency, the two doors behind the Legislators can be used also. In the event of an emergency please walk quickly to the nearest exit. After exiting the room go to your left and exit the
building by the main entrance, that way, or follow the exit signs to one of the other exits. Please quickly exit the building and follow any instructions from the Capital Police. Do not delay and do not return unless and until you are advised that it is safe to do so. In the event of a lockdown announcement please remain in the Hearing Room, stay away from the exit doors and seek concealment behind desks and chairs until an “All Clear” announcement is heard.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. So now we are ready to begin. Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you. Thank you Chairman Kushner and Porter and Ranking Members Miner and Polletta. I appreciate you letting me come today. I am actually going to yield my time to a constituent. I’ve gotten calls. I’m up here to talk about HB 5004. I’ve gotten calls from so many small businesses whether it be a farm who is worried about summer employment, whether it be a group of not for profit that’s working trying to get their most disabled community jobs out in the workforce even part-time and all our different non for profits have really called with real concerns about these changes. We all want people to have a fair wage we just want to make sure we do it right so we don’t give someone a raise and all of sudden they lose benefits that they have now that they didn’t have that they’re counting on. There are a lot of things in the Bill that we’re concerned about and with this I would like to introduce my constituent Ken Johnson from Durham, Connecticut who runs a day-care in Hamden, Connecticut.
KEN JOHNSON: Thank you. My name is Ken Johnson as Noreen said, I’m from Durham, Connecticut and I am a pre-school owner in Hamden, Connecticut. The name of the school is Sunshine Preschool. I am here to oppose Bill HB 5004, the Minimum Fair Wage in its current form because it places a huge financial burden on the working middleclass parents of our State. This hits home in every district in our State.

As an owner of a preschool I know that 75 percent of my expenses are payroll. With a $15.00 dollar minimum wage it is going to force me and every daycare preschool in this State to raise tuition by roughly 25 percent. The average fulltime preschool rate is $1,000 dollars per month. This translates into $12,000 dollars per year, 25 percent tuition increase will yield a $3,000 dollar increase post-tax, $4,000 pretax to our working families.

I have a single, divorced mother who makes $45,000 dollars a year. She is not eligible for Care 4 Kids Program and we are going to ask her to pay $4,000 dollars more. She doesn’t have the money. I have another family that have three kids in my program, two young infants and a three-year-old. we’re gonna ask that couple to pay $12,000 dollars more per year. Where’s the money gonna come from? That’s what I want to know. Since daycare is a necessity for our working parents of our State, this Bill puts an unfair burden on them. Therefore I implore you, please just think about it for a moment, okay. Either vote against the Bill or amended the Bill in a former fashion where you expand the Care 4 Kids Program beyond its current income limits. Also keep in mind, I currently have parents that are in the Care 4 Kids Program, with this $15.00 dollar minimum
wage increase that you are proposing they are gonna get kicked out it. They are gonna go backwards, okay from where they are today from a financial perspective because now they don’t have the Support of the Care 4 Kids Program so whatever money they are gonna get extra in their paycheck, it’s gone.

So please, I just want to say, I know you are trying to be compassionate to the working poor of this great State but be just as compassionate to the working middleclass parents of our State because they are the ones that are going to have to bear the biggest burden of this Bill in its current form or fashion. Thank you.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): I don’t know if you have any questions?

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Committee members, any questions? Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman. Good morning and thank you for being here. Its kind of interesting to hear the first individual testify this morning who I am not sure is opposed to people, I’m pretty sure you’re not opposed to people earing more money. I get a sense that you have some concern about the mechanism by which this Bill is going to provide an increase in income. I have to tell you that today’s my wife’s birthday and I went out this morning to get her a birthday present from a small business in Litchfield and he said, what’s gonna happen with minimum wage and I said that we actually have a hearing on the Bill today. And he said, well what most people don’t think about is that the learning curve, especially for young people is such that by the time you get them to put their cellphone down and concentrate on the customer, you
don’t even make any money at $10 dollars an hour and to think we’re gonna be obligated to pay more is really a problem. So I don’t know if that is a similar situation to your profession. I don’t know whether there is a point at which people almost become less employable. Is there any flexibility within your business if you have to pay a higher wage to reduce the number of employees?

KEN JOHNSON: So that’s a unique thing to the business, the preschool daycare business, we are mandated by the State to have, you know, a teacher pupil ratio, all right. I can’t cut staff, I can’t cut hours otherwise I am in noncompliance with the law. So it’s gonna have to be a simple pass through onto the working families.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you very much.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Senator let me just add one thing. When you’re talking employable I got a call from Vista which is an organization on our shorelines, they really, really help life skills with our disabled community and a few years ago we had a Bill up here in Labor that would have demanded that it fall on the disabled people while working got minimum wage. What they told me was most of their people do get minimum wage, but there is a segment of their population that will never be able to do a fair day’s work. But, those 15 hours a week they are allowed to work, for a lot less money, is a major part of their lives and we can’t lose sight of those people. They will never, a company is not gonna hire them at this $15 dollars an hour but they certainly, certainly hire them at a lower rate to encourage hiring the disabled but not limiting who they can hire. I know the disabled community
especially those that deal with the most disabled, the most serious disabled are really worried about taking that opportunity away from those folks. Thank you

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman. The other thing that I heard this morning was that it's not just this legislation and I don't know whether you have a comment on the sheer magnitude of all the labor considerations that are being undertaken this year, whether it's an increase in minimum wage, shift scheduling, paid family and medical leave some of those as they are currently drafted are newer to the employee not to the employer but almost in all cases there is a, there seems to be, at least with those that communicate to me that have, I think like yours, probably businesses of less than 25 employees this fear that a kind of a business tsunami is headed in their way and even if you wanted to one or two of these pieces, right now you're looking at all of them and that's what the legislature seems to be looking at. Do you have a comment on anything?

KEN JOHNSON: Yeah, just a quick comment. In doing a little research and educate myself, I came across a study done by the University of Washington. As you know the City of Seattle implemented a $15 dollar minimum wage several years ago and the study looked at the low wage earners, you know, people making under $20 dollars and where the employment levels went. The conclusion was that the employment actually dropped, okay, in the two years since they implemented the $15 dollar minimum wage meaning people were eliminating jobs even though Seattle was going through a major economic boom. So certainly Connecticut, we're not in that position
unfortunately of having a great economy but that I think is the reality of what’s gonna happen here. There’s gonna be, you know, mass automation at a lot of places and that’s actually gonna result in less jobs for people in the end.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Other Committee Members? Representative Porter.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Madam Chair and thank you Representative Kokoruda and your constituent for coming in to testify this morning. I think it’s important that we hear all perspectives and just listening to you this morning, I think the first question I would impose to you is what are your suggestions? I know you suggested expanding Care 4 Kids but we do live in a society were people are having two work two, three and four jobs to make ends meet and we’ve heard many times about raining the minimum wage some of which you’ve mentioned and speaking about the disabled, the young folks, the older folks, all the people that are actually over 90 percent of the jobs we gained back were minimum wage jobs, right. People are struggling. So what is your solution if we don’t raise the minimum wage how do you help people because I think the ideal situation is to have people makin enough money so we don’t have to worry about qualifying for Care 4 Kids, for food stamps or for Medicaid, that they will be self-sufficient and they will have sustainable income. So I would be very interested to hear from you as a small business owner because your business is what pushes the economy, we understand that we are very sympathetic
for small business. We are not trying to hurt small business, that is the heartbeat of any state. So tell me what your ideas are around. And I’m sorry, Representative Kokoruda but I would really like to hear from the business owner first and then you can weigh in but as a business owner I want to hear his perspective on that. Thank you.

KEN JOHNSON: As a business owner, you know, I just reference the study from the University of Washington. The $15 dollar minimum wage will, in my opinion result in job losses. It will force businesses to close, especially daycares and preschools because at some point there is a breaking point, right? You know, the tuition is too expensive, you know, parents aren’t gonna, they’re gonna find alternatives. They are going to quit their jobs what have you. So, you know I think its going, pushing it in the wrong direction. As far as your question about how do we lift up the working poor, that question is way too big of a question for me to answer to be honest with you. But I mean certainly small business is part of the answer to that problem and this minimum wage Bill hurts small business so we can’t be part of the solution when there is numerous mandates coming down in aggregate will, you know, increase to cost of doing business for every small business in our State.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Okay and you referenced the University of Washington study but Economics Policy Institute has actually done a study as well and what they’ve shown is that in all the states and cities where minimum wage has been raised there has been a neutral impact. That there has been no job loss, the hours have not decreased, they haven’t had to lay workers off. Actually is has increased
productivity, it has increased retention. I mean the things that employers are having to worry about turnover, no issues have been sought and it actually has put more money in the pockets of people that have disposable income which means that they are spending that money in their local economy which is what Connecticut is desperately in need of. So just in response to the study you’re looking at there is a study we’re looking at that actually say the opposite of what your claiming. Yes, Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you, Representative Porter. You know I think everyone wants a fair wage and I totally agree with you. I think my message to you is one size doesn’t fit all. Put the example two years ago I had a young man testify. He was severely disabled but he had a job at Yale or St. Rafael’s. He was filling those little bags we get with shampoo and he worked two days a week. I can’t tell you what that meant to him. That was his life. That was his connection. Put him at a $15 dollar, they aren’t gonna provide that work for him at $15 dollars an hour so I think when you look at teenagers. A farmer called me this morning and said, I hire teenagers. They are 16-17 years old. They have never had a job, I teach em. I’m not gonna hire them at $15 dollars an hour, I just can’t. So take a look at maybe your entry level jobs, your disabled and also we’ve got to take a look at how this increase is gonna impact some of our middle class because I think if we ran this past election, we all ran on helping and working to build small businesses to help our State and I think we just kind of left them out a little bit of the conversation. I sure hope going forward that
conversation happens with the not for profit community, certainly the small business community and including our farmers. But thank you so much, Representative.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Representative Kokoruda and thank you for that response. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Thank you for your testifying today and I know we are going to have a lot of folks testifying on this issue. I do want to say one thing to your constituent here, so childcare has been an issues that I cared about my entire adult life having had three kids and childcare and so I know we’re very sensitive to how expensive childcare is for middle class families and working families by the way, but I also know that I always wanted my kids to be in the care of someone who earned a good wage and could afford to pay their bills and take care of their families and, you know I think we have to recognize how important those workers are and they are often the people that would benefit from this minimum wage Bill. I hear what you are saying about benefit cliffs that people might be facing, we’re hearing that some different things on that issue, that perhaps it isn’t as dire as one would think but I don’t think it should be dire for anyone and we need to adjust the benefits to make sure no one is losing benefits because they chose to have a good wage. And so I think there is a lot of ways that we need to approach this and make sure we’re doing it from a holistic approach so that people aren’t hurt. Thank you. So next we have Senator Paul Formica. Good morning, Senator.
SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Good morning, Senator. Good morning, everyone, Senator Kushner, Senator, I’m sorry, Representative Porter, I was just going to give you a demotion, my apology for that, Senator Miner and Representative Poletta. I am here this morning to speak in opposition of SB 764 which is AN ACT PROHIBITING "ON-CALL" SHIFT SCHEDULING. I had an opportunity to look over the Bill and I’m just gonna just kind of go over a few of my thoughts with regard to this Bill which I believe is a little bit of overkill and detrimental to small business operations as that they manage themselves on Main Street.

This calls in Line 61 for an “Employer to pay half of the employees regular rate for any scheduled work hours the employee does not work due to the employer cancelling or reducing work hours” after the employee reports to work for example. Now I think there are a number of issues that could occur when businesses operate that would cause some of these things. Some of them are unusual and don’t happen, you know, but if business is slow and you decide to send, you know, somebody home. In my case I operate a small business with 43 employees, we’ve had the great pleasure of being in business for 35 years and we provide a lot of benefits to our employees but if we have to send someone home for a couple of hours this calls for us paying for them.

It also says that with less than 72 hours prior to commencement of the scheduled work hours they would have to be paid that, they would have to be paid that rate. The Bill I think does differ in something that I read last year that includes some weather events. I don’t remember that is last year’s Bill but it says extreme weather events. So
who determines what is extreme and how is that defined? You know, in my case if we have, you know, a quarter inch of snow I just can’t sell food, people just don’t come out for that reason for would that be considered extreme? So I think that that is somewhat problematic.

An employee may decline a work shift that begins in Line 85-85 that “begins less than 11 hours after the end of a previous day’s shift.” You know we have opportunities, you people work dinner, they come back and they work lunch and you come in at nine o’clock. You know, you get out of there at ten o’clock, eleven o’clock so the question is, you know, I don’t know how the 11 hours was determined. People work a lot, sometimes you don’t get a lot of sleep. That has to do with any business but most especially a restaurant business. Then is call, “If an employee decides to work it has to be notified in writing and they get time and a half compensation for anything on that shift” so it doesn’t spell out whether they get time and a half for the hours that bring them past the 11 or for the entire shift, you know, that they have to work. So, you know, I’m a little concerned about this.

And finally in Line 108-109 with regard to keeping true and accurate records for “not less than three years of the shifts worked each day and each week by each employee and each employee’s work schedule and any revisions thereof” - you’re shaking your head - either you agree with me or I’m reading this wrong, I’m not sure which, but you know, that seems to be a little heavy handed with regard to keeping those kind of records. As it is we keep, you know, we keep many records and whatever and so that’s my comments with regard to that Bill.
You know, I will just touch base on minimum wage. I understand as a small business person, minimum wage increase is coming. There is nothing we can do but I would love to see some opportunities that benefit the business community as an offset for that. So I thank you for your time and attention. I know you’re gonna have a long day today and I appreciate the courtesy of getting me heard. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you and I came from a long line of small business owners and so I particularly like you last comment about finding other offsets and I think, you know we have to look at ways to promote small businesses in this State but not at the expense of the worker, so I think we’ll find some common ground along the way.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Well I hope so. Small business provides, you know, 80 percent of the jobs in this country. There is a lot of talk about the Pfizer’s and the electric boats, and the Sikorsky’s and the Pratts of this world but it is small business on Main Street that provides those jobs and, you know, we provide in my case health insurance which I contribute 50 percent, paid sick, you know, sick days, they can buy into a pension, you know, they get employee discounts. You know, there is a lot of things that happen and this onslaught, this assault on small business in a variety of these Bills that I see coming up, I think, you know, we have to kind of either balance or dial it back and I’d love to see a balance. So thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): So now we’ve heard onslaught and tsunami but I do want to say I think
that most of the people I’ve talked to about the Bills we’re proposing really understand that when we help working people we help small businesses in this State because you are the backbone of our community so are the, you know, working and middle class families that live in the community and, you know, buy from you. So I think we do want to take a holistic approach to it. So are there comments from the Committee or questions? Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman. Thank you for being here, Senator. I don’t know if you have a copy of the Bill. Do you have a copy of the Bill? Right, you had referred to a line so, as I look through the language there is a section here that says, “no wages shall be due if an employee submits in writing” that that’s acceptable and I think it had to do with if an employee requests not coming in. So what would your policy be in terms of someone calling themselves, out so to speak if they were sick and unable to come to work or a problem occurred with an automobile so they didn’t have transportation. Do you require them to submit anything in writing now?

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): We do not, no.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): And so do you require them to submit something in writing afterwards, is there a written statement required to submit to you afterwards that says, you know, I didn’t come in on Monday or is it just a normal pay slip or I’m not even sure how you would do it.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): We don’t, you know, if people don’t come in require written things unless I becomes a medical issue that they are restricted in the duties of the operation we ask that the provide
something from their medical provider that says that, you know, they’ve been seen or can’t do that.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): And through you, Madam Chairman. You mentioned I think it was line 83 severe weather conditions, so if there is a circumstance where you can see based on the number of individuals that may have cancelled a reservation and as you point out, let’s say it’s for a quarter of an inch, I don’t know what the right number is, but I think your testimony was that probably doesn’t qualify as a severe weather condition. What normally happens now? Are there employees that have a long history of kind of working together to decide you know what, last week when this happened you didn’t come in so this week I’ll just stay home. Is there a procedure that seems to be mutually acceptable to employees and therefore this almost seems like it’s?

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): We have a lot of single moms for example in my business that work together in a variety of ways to manage their shifts and this Bill I think recognizes the fact that people can trade-off shifts without, you know, without problems here and that happens quite a bit of time. But, you know, we get canceled with even the threat of weather in the afternoon. So you know I might have people working a lunch and dinner shift and then there’s this storm. For example the other day, it was projected all daylong its gonna be this storm, we didn’t anything until after midnight I don’t think and but yet, you know, people didn’t come in and so we let people have the opportunity to not work. You say, who doesn’t want to work, who wants to stay knowing that you’re not gonna make any money. But in terms of, you know, generating a lot
of tips. So they work together on a cooperative basis to try to figure out what’s best, an example snow days, you live within two miles, I live within 20, you know, maybe I’ll come in because we can get back and forth but, this takes away that flexibility.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): As so through you, Madam Chairman. So in that case that you cite when the actual weather event didn’t occur until very late that night, certainly depending on what day it was, you might not even have been open anyway, the actual risk caused people to cancel and therefore the event wasn’t at the time the wages needed to be reduced and in your view then, this Bill would trigger a compensation event with almost no or very limited revenue because the people that were actually planning to be there so the income gets cancelled.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Certainly in the case of a banquet, you know you have 60 or 100 people that are scheduled to come in, they decide to cancel that with the impending threat even if it’s 24 hours before so that they give their people notice that they can’t get there. You know, this Bill requires a three day, three practical day notice and you end up losing as a business owner the opportunity for the revenue and to provide the service that we provide to the community but also we would then be forced to pay the employees, you know, as a result of that cancellation.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Representative Rutigliano.

REP. RUTIGLIANO (123RD): Thank you, Madam Chairman. Good afternoon, Senator. How are you. Listening to your testimony, as you know, you and I are in similar businesses and even the threat of snow can
really wipeout an entire night, so if the weather person on TV is wrong, which they normally are, it has a major impact on the night. So I was interested in your policy on how you do it. We sort of do it the same way. Whoever lives the furthest gets called out first, cause, you know, we don’t want them driving just in case and if you live close those are the ones that get called up last. But one of the most, do you have a patio in your location.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): I do.

REP. RUTIGLIANO (123RD): You do, so I’m curious to know how you handle that. The patio in our location is one of the most desirable shifts in the summertime cause the server could potentially made a lot more money because it’s a beautiful summer night they, you know, it’s always gonna busy but they also run the risk that if it going to rain that night, that they may or may not be able to trade off on the inside. Does the Bill speak to this because that certainly wouldn’t be a weather emergency but it’s sort of like how our industry works? Sometimes the servers in my business are excited when it starts raining because you get a Saturday night or a Friday night off and they feel pretty happy about it.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Yes, sometimes they pray for rain I think [Laughter]on Friday or Saturday night. But, you know, the other side of that coin is, you know, you get a hot sunny summer day that, you know 95 or 100 degrees, there’s not a lot of people that want to be sitting outside and having, you know, hot soup or anything for lunch out there, so may or may not be considered extreme. So I don’t think either case is defined well in this Bill and I don’t think either case is, you know, is
contemplated in this legislation proposed legislation.

REP. RUTIGLIANO (123RD): I tend to agree with you, cause really our weather, in our particular industry and industries sort of like amusement parks, because we have Lake Compounce and Quassapaug in the State those industries don’t shutdown. The Governor is never going to make a declaration of a weather emergency to shut them down. It’s got to be a severely hot day or possibly a rainy day and so I think that extends through many, what would we deem opportunity or low wage or entry level job industry sort of like temporary summer work and stuff like that that this affects.

But if we could just touch on the minimum wage just a little bit. We all know that servers make below minimum wage. Have you ever run the calculation for your operation on what the true hourly rate is that your servers make that means claimed tips per hour?

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): You know, we have an idea, an ongoing idea of what it is and it’s usually a multiple of the current minimum wage.

REP. RUTIGLIANO (123RD): Right, do you have that number handy. I won’t hold you to it, you could ballpark, that’s fine.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): I didn’t bring it but it is often times between, you know, $15 and $25 dollars an hour depending on the day of the week. A Tuesday lunch would be different than a Saturday night for example.

REP. RUTIGLIANO (123RD): Right, so and those are fully taxable wages?
SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Those are fully taxable wages.

REP. RUTIGLIANO (123RD): So if a server receives an hourly rate and then receives a tip, you pay taxes on the claimed tip that they?

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): That’s correct. And we’re very, we work very hard to make sure all those tips are claimed.

REP. RUTIGLIANO (123RD): All right, I’ll leave it at that. Thank you, Senator. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Other comments or questions? I just have one. I know you mentioned banquets and weather happens, we have a hard time preventing that and so I am curious, so when you have a banquet do you take a deposit from the person who, you know, scheduled the banquet and how do you deal with that?

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): We often times because we’ve been in business for so long in our community and most of our customers are from the area nearby, we may take a credit card but not charge the credit card until the actual event has occurred. Sometimes we will, people will book events, they are booking events now for something in August so, you know we may have a credit card on file but we don’t do anything with it. If were to, in fact, at the customer’s instance run the credit card for a particular number and the banquet was cancelled, that would just be reimbursed or credited back to the customer.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I think that was a great advertisement just now for people to come use your
business, cause unfortunately I’ve seen too often that the deposit is kept when there is an event that is unavoidable but so now, you’ve got some free advertising.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Well, thank you very much. We try to err on the side of customer service and we hope that the State of Connecticut will begin to do the same.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Any other comments or questions? Okay, thank you very much.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Thank you very much, Senator, appreciate it.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Next on our list is Representative Cristin McCarthy-Vahey and David Cooper.

REP. MCCARTHEYVAHEY(133RD): Good morning Chairwomen Kushner and Porter and Ranking Members Miner and Polletta. It’s great to be with you today and I am here today in support of House Bill 5004 and Senate Bill 2 and I’d like today to cede my time to David Cooper from the Economic Policy Institute who is going to speak with you this morning.

DAVID COOPER: Thank you and good morning Madams Chairwomen and Members of the Committee. Thank you for allowing me to speak with you today.

As was said, my name is David Cooper, I am a Senior Analyst at the Economic Policy Institute, a nonpartisan, nonprofit research organization in Washington, D.C. that focuses on the economic conditions of low and middle income working families. I am here testifying in support of HB 5004 and SB 2 which raise Connecticut’s minimum wage
to $15 dollars by 2022 and then index to inflation thereafter. I’ve provided the Committee with written testimony. I am going to try to summarize the points from that testimony right now.

First I want to stress that $15 dollars in 2022 is a reasonable and appropriate level for the state’s minimum wage. When Connecticut’s minimum wage rose to $10.10 dollars back in 2017 it reached essentially the same inflation adjusted value that it had in 1968. That was the Federal minimum wage at that time. Connecticut used the Federal minimum wage until 1991. In other words, as of just two years ago minimum wage workers in Connecticut were finally being paid the same rate as their counterparts 50 years ago. Yet over the last 50 years the economy has grown dramatically. Labor productivity has more than doubled and low wage workers today are typically older and have more education than their counterparts from the 1960s. As such there is really no economic justification why minimum wage workers today should be paid the same thing as they were five decades ago.

On based on the Congressional Budget Offices projections for inflation, $15 dollars in 2022 is the equivalent of about $13.60 per hour in today’s dollars. So that would be a 34 percent increase in purchasing power over the 1968 value. Without question that would be a significant improvement for the state’s lowest paid workers, but it still arguably a modest increase compared with the 113 percent increase in our economy’s capacity to deliver higher wages and better living standards over the last 50 years.
A $15 dollar minimum wage in 2022 would also help to undo much of the growth inequality that has occurred in Connecticut since the 1960s. At its high point in 1968 the Federal minimum wage was equal to 52 percent of the median wage of fulltime workers. So in other words someone at the minimum wage was being paid just over half what a typical middleclass worker was being paid. Today in Connecticut a minimum wage worker is being paid about 38 percent of what a typical middleclass worker in the state is being paid.

Now based on conservative assumptions for wage growth over the next three years, if the Connecticut minimum wage is raised to $15 dollars in 2022, it will again be equal to about 52 percent of the median wage of fulltime workers in this state, the same as it was in 1968. That means that the distance between those low wage jobs and those paid in the middleclass will be back where it was for the previous generation.

Now whenever minimum wage increases are proposed, concerns are always raised about the potential impact it might have on employment. Not surprisingly this is one of the most studied topics in economics and though there may appear to be controversy about the minimum wage’s effect the bulk of research over the past 20 years has concluded that minimum wage increase have worked exactly as intended lifting pay for low wage workers with little if any impact on employment.

Let me note just two important papers in the 2016 paper Paul Wolfson and Dale Belman reviewed 15 years of published research on the minimum wage since 2001 comprising 739 estimated employment effects.
published in 37 studies and concluded that there was, “No support for the proposition that the minimum wage has had an important effect on U.S. employment.” More recently an NBER paper published just last month by Doruk Cengiz and coauthors examined the effect of 138 state and federal minimum wage changes that occurred between 1979 and 2014. These included minimum wages rising as high as 55 percent of the median wage so higher than what is being proposed today and they found no evidence of any reduction in the number of jobs for low wage workers even when they looked for effects specifically on worker’s without a college degree, people of color and young workers.

Economists now recognize that the Basic Econ 101 Models of Labor Markets do not accurately describe real world experience of higher minimum wages. Rather than simply cutting staff or hours businesses are typically able to adjust through a variety of channels such as reduced turnover, higher productivity, increased consumer demand resulting from the wage increase. Low wage workers are consumers and when they have more in their paychecks they go out and spend it right away.

Today researches are asking far more important questions about the impact of higher minimum wages that focusing narrowly on only employment impacts. Careful studies have shown that raising the minimum wage reduces poverty and causes family incomes to grow and actually that same study shows that growth in family incomes actually accelerates in the years after the minimum wage has gone up. Raising the minimum wage is associated with better public health outcomes and has been shown to reduce recidivism. Raising the minimum wage to $15 dollars by 2022
would lift pay for hundreds of thousands of Connecticut workers helping their families and their communities and by indexing to inflation this issue would be largely solved. Lawmakers would not need to revisit it again and again and businesses would be able to plan for what the increase would be year after year. I urge the Committee to support this legislation. I'm happy to answer any of your questions.


REP. POLLETTA (68TH): Good morning. Question for the good Representative. We’ve heard a lot of debate in this Committee over the last several weeks regarding being competitive with other states, where is Connecticut in terms of the minimum wage with other states?

REP. MC CARRY VAHEY (133RD): So, I’m not exactly certain where we stand and I know that I should know that. But what I do know is what the impact is here and I think for me the focus is on for us in Connecticut the businesses that we have and trying to make sure that they can remain competitive but also that our residents, we know in Connecticut one of the biggest issues we have is income inequality and this is something that will allow residents to be able to earn closer to a living wage and to be able to put that money back into our economy.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): Okay and either of you could answer this question. Do either of you believe that $15 dollars an hour is a living wage in the State of Connecticut?
REP. MCCARTHY VAHEY (133RD): I don’t think anyone is saying that the minimum wage is a living wage. I think it is something that we can aspire to but this is the approach here is to try to take a step approach and a more balanced approach and the indexing to inflation is something that will also help that going forward.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): So if I’m understanding this correctly not only would the minimum wage increase under this Bill to $15 dollars an hour over whether it be three or four years, but then it would continue to go up based on the index?

DAVID COOPER: It would be automatically adjusted for inflation until we have the same purchasing power year after year. It would go up in nominal terms but inflation of course eats away at the spending power of nominal dollars so it would be the same, it would be $13.60 essentially for every year thereafter.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): So in essence the legislature would have, this would be deemed approval without a vote from the legislature past $15 dollars a hour.

DAVID COOPER: Well that sort of indexing already exists in 19 states throughout the country.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): Does it exist here in Connecticut right now?

DAVID COOPER: No, it does not.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Representative Rutigliano.

REP. RUTIGLIANO (123RD): Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chairman. Good afternoon. Has anybody at EPI
run a business, I mean have you ever run a business, have you ever made a payroll? Have you ever had to go through those struggles that other people go through?

DAVID COOPER: I’ve never owned a business.

REP. RUTIGLIANO (123RD): Right, so you think it’s your opinion that raising currently somebody who pays the minimum wage, let’s take an amusement park or something. Raising their labor costs, 50 percent, 50 percent in five years will have no effect on their ability to hire, to maintain services to do anything. Absolutely no effect. And for Connecticut it would be over 10-12 years over 100 percent increase in the labor cost and all the taxes that are associated with that.

DAVID COOPER: So I’m not making any statement about the impact on an individual business, I mean businesses adjust and some will have to adjust in different ways. What I’m saying is that there has been a lot of research on this topic which has found that the average effect is no harm to employment but we know that low wage workers and low income families see their incomes rise.

REP. RUTIGLIANO (123RD): I get that but most studies also say that the people who start at minimum wage within six months are above the minimum wage, they’re already getting increases if they stay with the same employer long enough. See, my major concern is not so much, it’s more the opportunity that minimum wage represents. I know we like to talk about pathway to a better job or a pathway to a career, or a pathway to sustain yourself but how difficult is it to get to the third rung of the ladder if we are going to sit there and take the first two
rungs out? So that’s what I think is an unintended consequence of this, not that people don’t deserve to make more money. Sure, it’s really how do you get to job number three or career number four if all of a sudden you weren’t able to start.

DAVID COOPER: So, Representative I actually think a better metaphor is. The minimum wage is not a rung on the ladder, it is the floor that the ladder sits on. So if you are raising that floor you’re pushing the wages up, further up the distribution. Like I said earlier, you know, the minimum wage workers are starting at a lower point, they are starting from a lower floor than their counterparts 50 years ago.

REP. RUTIGLIANO (123RD): I’m not, that’s. You may think that that ladder sits on the floor but you have to start, you have to have an entry point into the labor market. Somebody has to give you an opportunity for a job. And now we don’t always end up in the job we have. I mean I know what my first job was, I could ask you what your first job was and I guarantee you it wasn’t what you’re doin now. But it’s your entry point. It’s where you learn to be an employee, it is where that opportunity exists to be in the marketplace to make a wage, so actually how to be an employee, it is a valuable thing for young people. And I think with automation and certain professionalizing where things are getting too expensive, we may be taking that opportunity away from our young people. So that’s one of my major concerns about the minimum wage.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Can I, Representative Rutigliano I know you’re passionate about this but I would ask that you allow the folks to answer your questions.
REP. RUTIGLIANO (123RD): I was Madam. To be perfectly honest it was conversation [Cross-talking] a hearing.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I was careful not to interrupt you while you’re speaking so I mentioned it that he was trying to complete a sentence but. This is a passionate issue for everybody at this table and in this room so we just have to make sure that we do it with respect.

REP. RUTIGLIANO (123RD): For the record, he smiles so I think we’re doing okay. [Laughter]

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Go ahead.

REP. MCCARTHY VAHEY (133RD): May I respond, Madam Chair?

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Absolutely.

REP. MCCARTHY VAHEY (133RD): So I just wanted to respond. I have not owned a business either and I can’t begin to appreciate some of the struggles that come with doing so but what I do want to say is that I think part of the issue and the reason why this continues to come before us is because it certainly is young people but it is also the hundreds of thousands of folks around the state who are not young people who where the minimum wage job is their primary job as an adult or perhaps an elderly person. So I think we need to make sure that we’re understanding and appreciating that piece as well.

REP. RUTIGLIANO (123RD): I do appreciate that and I also think there is something wrong with our economy in my opinion if somebody is 40 years old and still making the minimum wage. Where did we fail as an economy or as a state or whatever? So I look at the
minimum wage as an opportunity wage. So I know that is not always the case. I appreciate that, I really do and I feel for those people. But I feel something happened, where did we go wrong that they didn’t have the opportunity to advance. So my scope is limited. I had a couple of questions about the EPI but I think I’ll save ‘em. Well talk about it another time.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I’m not trying to close you down you can certainly ask them, go ahead.

REP. RUTIGLIANO (123RD): You said there is research everywhere. I can tell you my desk has ten studies on it from God knows where and there’s studies from all over the place and I know some of the ones I read are for certain right leaning or free-market thinktanks but I think it is unfair that the EPI, your organization which is fine that it exists but a primary source of your funding is from labor union. You have a perspective, your research has a perspective and I don’t think it would be fair if we didn’t at least acknowledge that here in the open.

DAVID COOPER: Sure so we publicly, we’re publicly where all our funding come from. We do get a third of our funding from labor unions but all the studies that I am citing are not studies that we did. It is research done by academics and universities published in top economic journals, peer reviewed but I agree with you there is always studies being passed around on both sides and I think a fair reading of the literature would be to say that the impact of the minimum wage on employment is so small that economists have trouble measuring it and they have these long academic debates as to whether there is statically significant effect or not. And again
I think that misses the forest for the trees because we know that this is a policy that lifts income, reduces poverty, that has other, you know, positive effects on communities so haggling over whether the effect was positive or negative and whether we can statically detect it or not, you know, is not the thing that should be determining whether you as policy makers are supportive of this policy.

REP. RUTIGLIANO (123RD): So, I appreciate that perspective, you may have a little more faith in academia than I do but I’ll leave it at that. I live in the real world. This is what I do for a living. I have employees, I know what it takes to pay people, I know what it takes, I try to give people opportunity, I want them to move up the ladder and, you know what, I think that the first two rungs of the ladder may lead to something better and I want people to have that opportunity. But, I appreciate your time and attention. I know I get a little conversational at times, which isn’t so formal and I appreciate it. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

REP. MCCARTHY VAHEY (133RD): Madam Chair, may I respond as well? I think I heard at the beginning of this hearing that the importance from hearing from so many different perspectives and that is actually one of the things I value most about being in this legislature is that a representative body we all, in fact every one of us sitting around this circle, come from different communities and interact on a daily basis with very different people and I think it is really important that we hear from folks who, yes you are going to hear a number of people today who will talk about statistics, who will talk about studies, who will share their stories and
their experience and perspectives. I think it is our job to make sure that we are hearing from everyone and to understand the impact as it exists from the perspective of where they are coming from. So whether you look at that ladder as the minimum wage sitting on the floor and being the floor or being the rung on the ladder we all get to have a piece of that conversation and then weigh those as we go forward in making the decision.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. I do want at ask a couple of questions. I do know that we all, I come from a small business experience as well and I worked for minimum wage when I started out. But I also recognized I was in the grocery business and I see in Connecticut because I live in Danbury perhaps, I am concerned and I heard from our constituents this summer that they feel that their kids and young adults and even as you have mentioned the elderly and other adults have to across the state line to New York because they can work for the same employer and get a higher wage there because of the minimum wage being higher in New York and, you know, that concerns me. Yeah I know it concerns the people in my district as one of the driving forces of wanting to compete effectively with New York when you get to Danbury but I wondered if you could speak more broadly about impacting our state being in competition with other states around us that have a higher minimum wage?

DAVID COOPER: Well certainly employers are gonna, employees potential employees are gonna want to work in the places where they can get paid more. So if you can get the same job, doing the same thing and it’s not that far away by crossing the state line and get paid significantly more, that is where more
folks are gonna wanna work and I think that, you know, that is one of the benefits of raising the minimum wage is that a lot of employers would probably want to raise pay for their workers in order to attract and retain the best folks but they worry that if they did it on their own they would be at a competitive disadvantage to other, you know, competing businesses in the area. If you raise the minimum wage you’re essentially allowing them to pay their staff more without being at a competitive disadvantage to other folks in the region and research is very clear that when wages go up, when the minimum wage is raised, it does reduce turnover. Folks stay on the job longer because that job is more valuable to them now. They are able to, you know, pay their bills more evenly.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Also, I think I’m really fascinated with the way you’ve informed us about how the minimum wage today compares to 50 years ago and, you know, when I worked at that minimum wage job 50 years ago I think it was more of a living wage. I know I was able to live more comfortably than I think people do today on minimum wage. I really am, I think we all look back into history and I’d say of that was a better time in the past and, you know maybe there is some concrete reason for that and I recognize it wasn’t better for everyone and I did have opportunities but there are a lot of people who didn’t and stayed at minimum wage jobs their entire life providing for their families and so, you know I do think that it’s understanding of how we compare today to 50 years ago is pretty important to what we do here in the legislature. So I hope, you know, I don’t know if you have anything more you can add to that but I think that is a very important point.
DAVID COOPER: Well I would just reiterate, you know, the economy’s capacity to deliver higher wages has more than doubled in the last 50 years so the notion that we can’t afford paying folks more than they were getting 50 years ago is just not plausible. You know, we have the capacity, we can pay folks more but they just has to be pressure to do so. You know, the other key thing that I mentioned earlier, you know, to say again is that when you look at where a minimum wage worker is today relative to a middleclass worker, they are starting out at a lower point. They are farther away from middleclass even if the dollar value of the minimum wage in Connecticut right now is the same as it was 50 years ago. So if, even if it is someone who is just starting out on the job, and again a lot of, most of the folks that would benefit from this policy are not young people starting on the job but even if they were, they are starting from a much lower place today than the previous generation.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Representative Rutigliano.

REP. RUTIGLIANO (123RD): Quickly, Madam. I just wanted, could you tell the minimum wage story about when you started out, and I know we’re not testifying but I wanted to share of maybe another side for just a second. I am a product of the minimum wage. Without somebody in my youth taking a chance on me, I was a dishwasher, I was a dishwasher in a couple of places, the cooks kinda liked me, taught me how to cook, I ended up in culinary school, I ended up opening up my own restaurant, right. So without that first employer being able to afford to take a change on me and give me some pot
scrubbing job, I probably am not here. I support my family, I do pretty well and it’s all because I had a start. So that has been my minimum wage experience but I appreciate that some people later in life are still on it and it’s probably not enough, so thank you. Thank you for the time and the second.


REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Madam Chair and thank you both for your testimony today. The question was asked of you, Representative McCarthy Vahey that you weren’t able to answer so is just want to respond to that. What are the neighboring states compared to Connecticut’s minimum wage? Massachusetts is currently $12 dollars, $15 dollars by 2023, New Jersey is at $8.85, $15 by 2024, New York is at $11.10, $12 dollars by 2020 until it hits $15 dollars and Rhode Island is actually $10.50 right now. So technically the majority of neighboring states actually have a higher minimum wage than us right now and they’re movin towards the $15 dollar minimum wage based on legislation that has been passed in those states.

REP. MCCARTHY VAHEY(133RD): Representative Porter may I just respond, so I think that many of you here have heard me talk about the importance of competitiveness in our states. I think it is important when we think about the minimum wage, a lot of our minimum wage workers are not folks who are moving and have the ability to go unlike the example, except for the example Senator Kushner’s talking about in terms of people being in close proximity to those state lines. But most of our
minimum wage folks are people who are here in Connecticut and who are going to have difficulty going elsewhere. So I just wanted to note that as well.

REP. PORTER (94TH): And thank you for making that note and I will also note that they also don’t have the ability to save or invest, right. Their money is disposable week to week, their incomes are going directly back into the economy and I think that is why this is so important because these are the folks that are really driving the economy and our economy is sufferin because they have no disposable income. They’re workin poor people. They’re working two, three and four jobs to make ends meet and they don’t have any money left over to save or to invest which means that the future is pretty bleak, right. The question I wanted to ask the economist what qualifies you, I mean what qualifies you as an economist? You’re not a business owner, but you’re an economist, can you just speak to that? Your credentials?

DAVID COOPER: I sure could. So I have a master’s in public policy from Georgetown. I’ve studied the minimum wage in particular for the last eight years working at the Economic Policy Institute. I have done, I testified in probably a dozen different statehouses and city councils on this. I’ve produced analysis of who would be impacted by the minimum wage for every levels of government. This is an issue that I have researched extensively for the last eight years.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you and I think one of the things that really stuck out to me is about doin the research around this is that since 1973 the net
productivity has risen 77 percent while wages have barely been above inflation increasing in real time at about 12.4 percent. Can you just speak to the impact that that has on a state?

DAVID COOPER: Well the impact that it has on the whole country is that we have, you know, the vast majority of American workers have had their wages stagnate for decades. The country has produced a lot more income but it just hasn’t gone to the paychecks of most workers and that means you have more folks who have to rely on public assistance, you have more folks who can’t afford to go to college, you have more folks having trouble buying homes, starting businesses. It just depresses consumer demand. We have a consumer driven economy, 70 percent of the U.S. economy and if folks don’t have money to spend then that is going to hamper economic growth.

REP. PORTER (94TH): And when you speak hampering economic growth, I would say it actually hampers business growth because business rely on household spending. And households rely on wages. So if the wages are stagnant, businesses, I mean we’re hearing that this is gonna hurt business but I would beg to differ that the fact that we are increasing wages for employees is hurting businesses because that disposable income is not there.

REP. MCCARTHY VAHEY (133RD): Representative Porter if I may also respond to something you said about saving and I think that you know that looking at long-term savings and retirement security is an issue that certainly I have been very interested in and many of us here in the legislature as well and I am a big proponent of even if you have 50 cents or a
dollar, you know to be able to save that. So there are lots of things that can happen, certainly we know that with the increase in wages those dollars do go back into the economy but perhaps we’re also empowering people in other ways to be able to provide the support that they need for themselves which we know that as leaders here, we are providing those supports over time whether it is respect to healthcare or that long-term care as people age. So I think it’s really important to me, when we look at raising the minimum wage we’re helping to empower people. I don’t sit here and deny there is impacts for business, there absolutely is and I don’t deny that we had issues yesterday in P&D and we’re talking about, you know, disruption in the workplace in many, many ways. This issue will cause adjustment certainly and it’s something that as I said over many, in many spaces and places we do have to balance that. I think that is why the steps approach is important. The indexing which is, you know, related to inflation is also important because again it is that stepped approach. But I think critical for me is that ability to get more money back to people so that they can also help better take care of themselves.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you for that. I think they can better take care of themselves and their families and if they are able to save, college is not such a burden on parents, right. These student loans and how they’re burdened doesn’t have to be as heavy a burden if they are allowed to make income that allows them to save for the future, around education which advances us in this country, we all know that, academia is very important. That is what helps to level the playing field in many instances
but what I find even more interesting is that since 2008 recession the majority of the jobs that we’ve recouped because we like to brag about that are actually minimum wage jobs. And we can all imagine how that impacts the state and the nation at large, right, and I do believe a big part of why Connecticut is struggling right now is because we don’t have the income and the revenues and the taxes being paid on that income to help us thrive. And we talk about spendin. We hear a lot about cut spendin. We need to cut spendin. Over half our spendin goes to helpin people that are not making enough money to help themselves. We actually spend about $25 billion dollars annually helpin people to help themselves. And I think it would be a wiser choice to actually look at the number that EPI has give us around $1.3 billion dollars goin into the paychecks of the people in this state if we increase the minimum wage to $15 dollars which is not a livable wage and it is, one of the pastor’s said this mornin, a bare, bare, minimum wage. So we are lookin at this in steps and I think we are taking the most bare minimum that we can take in the hopes of getting people there and Representative Rutigliano made a good point, you start at minimum wage and overtime you actually do get paid more so I’m encouraged to think that we’re raisin the floor to $15 dollars so now if they climb the ladder they are not starting at $10.10 they are startin at $15 dollars and they gonna get a livable wage a lot quicker than they would startin at the minimum wage that we currently have at $10.10 and the federal wage some states have of $7.25. So anything else you would like to add to that is welcome.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Representative Vargas.
REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. For Mr. Cooper, I watch with interest when there was that huge windfall, the tax breaks for American business in the Trump Administration and have you made any comparison in terms of what that huge windfall in comparison to raising the minimum wage to $15 dollars now, will that make it easier for corporations to raise that floor?

DAVID COOPER: I haven’t looked at that specifically. I do know that the overwhelming majority of benefits of that tax change went to high income households and to corporations and so presumably they would have to have more money to spend.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well I agree with what our Chairperson and Representative Porter said, we have a problem in the State of Connecticut that is that a lot of our smaller businesses are being put out of business by these big box stores and they are owed by out of state interests so the higher the profits that leave the State of Connecticut the less that money stays and gets reinvested in our own local economy. So one way to make sure that some of that profit that’s generated by these big box companies stays would be in the form of higher wages because as our Co-Chair said, people who make that extra money at the lower level is likely to spend the 100 percent of their wages trying to survive which means that in terms of our state sales tax people are buying. If you can live on one percent or less of your annual income that means 99 percent of that income is never faces a sales tax because you basically you need very little of your income to survive on. On the lower end of the scale, people are forced to spend 100 percent of their income
which means that the state coffers now taps that wealth and part of that money stays and gets reinvested. We didn’t have that problem when I came to Hartford as a young guy, a teacher in 1972 almost every neighborhood had a local neighborhood pharmacist that operated an independent pharmacy and the money that the pharmacist made, any profit they made, they lived in the community, they paid property tax, they paid sales tax, they bought from other businesses now we have CVS, Walgreen’s. We have these huge big box corporations and it’s very different. You know, if you needed 100 bucks to help the boy scouts their Jamboree or whatever you went to the neighborhood pharmacist, they just opened up the cash register and made a donation. Now you go to these CVS, Walgreens you have to go through their corporate offices and their corporate giving policy, it’s a real hassle and most of the time you get a “no” for an answer. So I see minimum wage as something that can be done and now that they received these windfall tax benefits it seems to me that rather than giving money to people who don’t need it in the form of bonuses and increased salaries to people who are the higher end managers that maybe they could put a little back into their frontline workers, who by the way, we’re subsidizing many times with our human services network as taxpayers. Thoughts on that Mr. Cooper?

DAVID COOPER: So, you know, in the analysis we did of the Connecticut proposal we know that 50 percent of the workers that would be affected come from households with total family income of less that $50,000 dollars a year and we know that low income families tend to spend every dollar that they earn because they must. That’s different from a higher
income household which because they have more money they tend to save a portion of every additional dollar so, you’re right, when you shift money into lower income households it can have this simulative effect on the economy because you just have more dollars circulating between businesses you would have otherwise. If those dollars were kept in higher income households a lot of it would just sit in the back, it wouldn’t be circulating, so yes that certainly can lead to stronger economic growth, more business activity when you are shifting pay to lower income workers and raising wages for low income families. The other thing I would just mention and you talked about pharmacies and consolidation in pharmacies and there is actually a real interesting new set research gaining a lot of notoriety these days around something called monopsony and I won’t go into the details on it but basically what it means is there has been so much consolidation between a lot of these industries that those businesses face less competition amongst each other to attract more workers and when they face less competition to attract workers they don’t have any pressure to raise pay. So as that consolidation has happened over the last 30 years there is less and less pressure on businesses to lift pay for lower skilled positions which makes policies like the minimum wage all the more important because it is one of the few things that can lead to pay increases for those less skilled workers.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you very much for that response because I mean it’s happening, you know, when you have big box stores that are selling hardware goods like Home Depot putting the small neighborhood hardware stores out of business, I mean
it’s happening in almost every sector of the economy. You know before I used to complain about, you know, how Walmart came into a market, lowered the prices they could afford to do because they have so many stores all over the rest of the country they can afford to undersell the market, put the little retailers out of business and then once they have a monopoly on the market they can raise the prices again. So, I don’t see it as a healthy thing for the economy plus the other thing is these corporations that are trading on Wall Street the owners are not necessarily Connecticut residents. So the profits could go who knows, they could go to China, to Italy, to Germany where ever the investors may live. That’s where the profits go and these managers are all looking for the next quarter to how much money they can make in the next quarter for their stockholders. So I’d like to see our small business community healthy, growing. We just had a press conference on trying to create an affordable healthcare option, a public healthcare option for public, for small business workers and I think that’s were our direction should be, small businesses helping workers, helping small businesses and making sure these large corporations, you know, instead of making $20 billion dollars in profit why can’t they make $18 billion and leave $2 billion in the local economies to help us out. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman. Good morning, well good afternoon to both of you. So I’m interested in the study process, so was that an analysis that looked back a certain period of
time to determine the net effect of the most recent minimum wage increases?

DAVID COOPER: Which study are you referring to, sir?

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Through you, Madam Chair. I thought you indicated that you had done an evaluation of study of the State of Connecticut and the impact that an increase in the minimum wage would have here.

DAVID COOPER: We did an analysis of the workforce that would be effected by an increase to $15 dollars by 2022 and the likely resulting increase in wages that would come from such a proposal. So it was a simulation. We have a microsimulation model that basically uses publicly available data to look at what wages of workers in Connecticut are right now and it estimates which of those workers will get a raise if the minimum wage were increased to $15 dollars and what the resulting wage impacts would be.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): And through you, Madam Chairman. So was there any retrospective analysis done going into this decision or is it a decision on the valuation based on the next step in that process?

DAVID COOPER: So the study that I am referring to was just looking prospectively at what again the workforce that would be affect by $15 dollars in 2022 and what the likely wage impacts would be but there certainly is, like I said, have been dozens if not hundreds of studies on past minimum wage increases.
SENATOR MINER (30TH): Through you, Madam Chairman. So as part of this study did the analysis include potential reduction in workforce?

DAVID COOPER: This one did not but certainly many others have.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): And so in the State of Connecticut so far the way EPI is looking at this proposal there would or wouldn’t be a reduction in workforce as a result of an increase in minimum wage?

DAVID COOPER: Again, in the way the literature has looked at this question has found that increases in minimum wages have had little to any effect on employment levels and so in our study all we did was examine the workforce that is likely to be effected by the proposal and what the results in wage increase would be.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): And so through you, Madam Chairman. Representative Vargas speaks to larger corporations and it seems to the eye here in the State of Connecticut that larger corporations may already have or are undertaking a business model, again to the eye that would be less dependent on people and more dependent on technology. So when you walk into a large retailer in the State of Connecticut in all likelihood when you go to check out you have an option between six checkout counters where there is a person standing there and nine checkouts kiosks where the only thing standing there is the kiosk. Are you suggesting that that isn’t driven by increased costs of personnel?

DAVID COOPER: So technology is always improving and it’s funny the Johnson Commission, the Johnson
Presidency actually established a commission looking at the impacts of technology on jobs because they were concerned that the advent of, you know, powered machines in construction would eliminate all construction job. Same thing when the ATM was first released they thought it would be the end of bank tellers, we would have no more bank employment because ATMs would replace all of them. The truth is technology may change the composition of jobs but there is no evidence that it changes that it reduces or changes the number of jobs because even though it may replace some tasks, like a check out person it also leads to higher demand in other job categories. So great example there’s paper by Davit Otter at MIT that looks specifically at what happened in fast foods resulting, you know, as result in technology over the last few years and what they found was that, yes, even though you may see fewer cashiers, fewer people ringing you up, more machines doing that process, you actually need more cooks in the back because if you are able to process more orders at the same period of time through the machines you’re gonna need more people flipping burgers in the back of the house. So in other words, again, increases in wages, changes in policies, technologies always change the composition of job but there is always going to be a lowest paid job and the minimum wage sets the standard for what that job pays.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): And just so that I can find it. Through you, Madam Chairman. The study that you referred to was that President Lyndon Johnson?

DAVID COOPER: I believe it was the Johnson Commission. I’d be happy to send it to you, sir. I don’t remember off the top of my head.
SENATOR MINER (30TH): I’m just trying to get a sense of how recent it was.

DAVID COOPER: Again I was just making reference to the fact that 50 years ago, you know, there were concerns, they were more concerned that technology was going to eliminate entire categories of jobs. I mean we can create a lot of jobs if we ban bulldozers, but I don’t think anyone would want to do that.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you. So I did not suggest that technology was going to eliminate all jobs I was at least providing you with some insight about the State of Connecticut that I have already witnessed is in the fast food industry, in the grocery industry, in the large retail industry all of the people that I would hope would benefit from any increase in wages there seems to be a technological move for some reason. And perhaps it does allow more people to go through the kiosk, maybe it does provide an opportunity in the backroom for someone to restock shelves, I don’t have all that knowledge. I didn’t do the analysis in Connecticut, I just wasn’t sure whether EPI had considered that as part of the analysis. My other question is, it seems like you focused solely on the increase in minimum wage. The State of Connecticut is currently considering a number of other labor initiatives which have in the eyes of many some value. Is there a, like an all encompassing evaluation EPI has done as to the business affects on for instance shift scheduling on a business, increased minimum wage any number of things that we are currently evaluating, do they have a cumulative affect in your mind in terms of your economic analysis in one state or the other? Is it possible
they have any cumulative affect or are they all, I would?

DAVID COOPER: I wouldn’t want to speculate. We didn’t look at anything other than the minimum wage.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Okay. Thank you, Madam Chairman. I do appreciate you being here today to testify.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): So I don’t know if this is your area of expertise but on the issue of technology I think that historically throughout many generations in our country there has been improved technology and I am not convinced that if the technology is out there I’m assuming that if the technology is out there that employers and corporations are gonna use it. Even if it’s not replacing, I don’t think their motive is to replace workers, I think there motive is to make more money and that’s typically what happens when you introduce technology. I don’t think we can stop that. I know there was an effort to stop that probably a hundred years ago and I don’t think that worked too well but I do think, I think the argument that we’ll lose jobs if we raise the minimum wage due to technology I’m not sure there’s a link there, but could you address that more, in more detail?

DAVID COOPER: Well, I think you said it very well. If employers can reduce costs or generate increased profits by adopting some new technology they will do it regardless of the level of the minimum wage and as I said most research that have looked at this has found that technology does change the composition of jobs, people do different things than they did 50-60 years ago but there is always a lowest paid job and where ever that floor is set is going to
establish wage levels that are gonna impact jobs both at the bottom and further up the wage ladder.

REP. MC CARTHY VAHEY (133RD): Madam Chair may I also respond? I think it’s important as Senator Miner referenced that we don’t look at things in a vacuum and I know today we are here before you on one particular Bill. But the reality is technology is as I referenced and disruption in the workplace will continue to happen, it absolutely will for many different reasons in part because we want to have a better quality of life. We have innovation and improvement in lots of areas and that is why we look at things like workforce development and all kinds of other policies that will help to impact that. But it doesn’t change the fact that we need to be able to provide a sustainable wage, and no not a living wage, but improve that minimum and that floor for people who are in those jobs. So I appreciate that you have a discussion here today about this one Bill but at the same time that we are looking at a lot of different policies that impact that area.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Representative Vargas.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. When Senator Miner was speaking about all these technological innovations it brought to mind something that one of my professors, a Jesuit priest once said to us when we were young, much younger than we are today, said listen you’re a lucky generation because with robotization, computerization productivity is going to continue to rise and with less hours instead of a 40-hour workweek, 30 hours, maybe 20 hours you’ll be able to generate more wealth than we’re currently generating with 40 hours of work. So you’ll be able to work a
much smaller workweek and you’ll be able to increase your salaries as productivities goes up. I waited for that to happen all my life [Laughter] and much of what the good profession did come to pass. Productivity did go up. Computers came into play, robots came into play, we created more wealth, our gross national product continued to grow, but it seems that in terms of the benefit to workers were very little. So people are working longer hours than they have ever worked for less money than they worked before when you compare it to the buying power of the current dollar so all this productivity has been hoarded. So do you believe, Mr. Cooper that perhaps this is one way, one of the many strategies we can use to make sure that concentration of wealth doesn’t continue to happen? I think its egregious what’s happened. We probably have more wealth in the hands of less people per capita than even during the time of robber barons at the turn of the century.

DAVID COOPER: I mean, it’s absolutely the case that had we not let labor standards like the minimum wage erode over the last 50 years, workers would be enjoying more of the productivity gains that have occurred over that time. I mean just to put some numbers on it, had the federal minimum wage been raised at the same rate of productivity growth since 1968 it would be over $21 dollars an hour right now. So we’re talking about raising the Connecticut minimum wage to again about $13.60 in today’s dollars, that is less than a third of the way to that $21.60 or $21.80 whatever it is.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you for that response because I think that is wrong to cast us as being against productivity. I think we are for
innovation. I think we want to continue to generate a larger gross national product, make ourselves more productive. So nobody is against productivity as far as I know, nobody in this room is against productivity. If we can continue to make ourselves more efficient as a country all the better. The only thing we’re asking, I think, and people, my constituents asking me to advocate for is that we get a piece of that prosperity. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you, Representative Vargas. Thank you for saying it so well. Any other comments or questions? Thank you very much for coming here today.

REP. MC CARTHY VAHEY (133RD): Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Next on the list is Senator Martin Looney, our President.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Pardon my muffled voice, I’ve come down with a pretty heavy cold las week, probably caught it from my granddaughters who are in preschool, little petri dishes that bring home different germs everyday it seems. So good afternoon Senator Kushner, Senator Porter and Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. I’m Martin Looney, represent the 11th District parts of New Haven, Hamden and North Haven and I am here to testify on behalf of Senate Bill 2, House Bill 5004 and House Bill 7169 which all seek to gradually increase the minimum wage in Connecticut. Also would like to testify on Senate Bill 765 AN ACT PROHIBITING “ON-CALL” SHIFT SCHEDULING.
First of all regarding the minimum wage which under those Bills would be increased incrementally from $10.10 to $15 dollars per hour, thereafter the wage could be indexed to rise at the rate of inflation.

As policymakers, we are all well aware that hundreds of thousands of Connecticut workers who are struggling, each and every day, to support themselves and their families. According to the excellent report delivered to this committee in December 2016 by the Connecticut Low Wage Employer Advisory Board, at least 20 percent of Connecticut’s workforce and that’s at least 336,000 currently earn less than $15 dollars and in some of our poorest cities and towns, the percentages are far greater; in Hartford, for example, it is estimated that the majority of workers, 53 percent, earn less than that amount. Moreover, according to the Report, the sub-$15 workforce is disproportionately female, Black and Latino. A study by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston that is referenced in the Report estimates that in our state 33.7 percent of female workers, 43.1 percent of African-American workers, and 52.6 percent of Latino workers earn less than $15 dollars an hour. Another study referenced in the Report paints a darker picture when it comes to female workers in Connecticut and according to a study conducted jointly by the Economic Policy Institute and Connecticut Voices for Children, women compromise 58.4 percent of Connecticut workers that would directly benefit from an increase in the minimum wage to $15 dollars an hour.

Also the report illustrates that an oft-cited misconception about minimum wage workers is that most of them are teens looking for spending money is
completely untrue. Instead very significantly the report notes that the majority of Connecticut workers who earn less than $15 an hour are actually the primary breadwinners in their families and it states according to the Federal Reserve study the typical workers making less than $15 dollars an hour is in their mid-30’s and the CT Voices/EPI analysis that 90 percent of the workers who would benefit from the wage increase to $15 dollars an hour are 20 years of age or older, and 32.7 percent, nearly one-third of the sub-$15 dollar workers are parents with children. And finally contrary to the notion that minimum wage workers to the notion of minimum wage earners as teenagers living with their parents and earning pocket money, the Federal Reserve study also show that a majority of sub-$15 workers are the primary earners in their families.

So it’s easy to understand that requiring a sufficient minimum wage in the State of Connecticut is not a luxury. It is not a mere convenience. Instead, it is a virtually existential issue for thousands upon thousands of Connecticut families.

Connecticut has fallen behind the curve in enabling our residents to earn a living wage. Since 1979, the value of the state minimum wage has decreased despite an increase in the cost of living and employee productivity. A 2012 Connecticut Voices for Children report found that, though the minimum wage in Connecticut increased 184 percent in a little over three decades, from $2.91 in 1979 to $8.25 in 2012, and of course after that gradually up to $10.10 the actual value of the minimum wage has decreased by nine percent. We have increased the minimum wage to $10.10 in Connecticut. We are one of the first to reach that level but now have fallen
behind again. But a minimum wage of $10.10 still has less relative value than it did back in 1979. By taking this next step to increase the minimum wage to $15 dollars, we would be closer to catching up with the cost of living and allowing our low wage workers to support themselves and their families.

Based on a balancing test between the needs of Connecticut citizens and the reasonable expectation and requirements to be placed on Connecticut employers, the Low Wage Employer Advisory Board, after almost a year of gathering information and testimony, recommended to this Committee that the ultimate level of the Connecticut minimum wage be $15 dollars an hour, and that this increase from $10.10 be implemented gradually, over a few years, and that is the approach of the Bills being heard this morning.

The Report also concludes something that I believe is key: a gradual increase in the minimum wage as included in the bills being heard today, while providing an incalculable benefit to parents and children throughout the State of Connecticut will not hurt the economy of our state it likely will benefit our overall economy. What I means in practical terms that at $15 dollars an hour a worker would earn about the same by working 40 hours a week than she would have to work 55 or 60 hours a week at $10.10 an hour to get that same wage. So it would mean either enhanced opportunities for parents to spend more time with their children and have discretion for other activities rather than just having to be tied to the workplace for so many hours to scrape together a living.
In past years, arguments have been made to this Committee that raising Connecticut’s minimum wage would be a damaging to Connecticut’s economy. I’m sure that many of these same arguments will be raised today but that the Report discusses numerous studies providing evidence that gradually increasing the minimum wage would not hurt Connecticut’s overall economy and there has never been any evidence that the previous increase have had a damaging effect at all nor would just a gradual rise result in a decrease of employment throughout the state as the Report is evidence that first increasing the minimum wage will grow the Connecticut economy, it will create fiscal benefits and cost savings for employers and will also provide more stability in the workforce and studies also show that businesses will benefit from reduced worker turnover and cost of recruitment, better productivity and efficiency and then companies will place more confidence in the workforce they have in looking to train them and possibly groom them for promotions because there will be greater confidence that they will not be transitory in that job. Increased profit from additional sales and increased spending my low income working families as well. Historical increases in the minimum wage have had little or no negative effect on the employment of minimum wage workers even during times of weakness in the labor market and an increase in the minimum wage may result in additional state revenue from income and sales taxes while reducing spending for public assistance program. So this is a very important Bill this year, now the initiative we took several years ago to go to $10.10 an hour has been surpassed, superseded by time.
Also, the Senate Bill 764, prohibiting “On-Call” shift scheduling in many industries here in Connecticut employers require employees to be, “on-call” where the employee maybe required to come in to work with as little notice as the morning of. The instance an employee finds out at the last minute that he or she is not required to report to work may cause significant hardship. For example employees may have already turned down other opportunities for employment on that day, they may have paid for childcare or even started to commute to work but will no longer receive any compensation for that time. These unstable work hours impact many of Connecticut’s working families who as a result struggle with fluctuating income. So working mothers who budgets with the anticipation of the 30-hour work week, they find them self only working 10-hours in a given week. Assuming that mother is making that $10.10 hourly wage, her earnings would drop from $303 dollars to $101 dollars in the next week. This type of unpredictable unstable income makes it a struggle for families to meet basic expenses, arrange childcare, doctors appointments or family meals. Policymakers in many states including our neighbors in New York City have enacted new workhours protections that include advance notice of work schedules, compensation for on-call shifts and right to have input into their work schedules. For the health of our workforce and the health of our economy Connecticut should follow the lead of these other jurisdictions that have proved to be more enlightened in this regard.

So I urge you to support Senate Bill 764 to provide protections to working people in Connecticut as well
as the Bill seeking to raise the minimum wage.
Thank you, Madam Chair and Committee members.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you, Senator Looney. You can tell a real grandparent who didn’t even flinch with the laughter of children in the room, you’re used to that [Laughter]. Any questions or comments? Representative Hall.

REP. HALL (7TH): Yes, good after Senator Looney. You’ve been in the legislature for a little while now and I’m sure in the previous years that Connecticut has raised minimum wage, can you talk about some of the concerns that were raised at that point and whether or not those things are, came to pass.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): Well I think Representative ever single time that a minimum wage increase has been proposed the same arguments get made that it is going to be damaging to employers, it’s going to cause reduction in the workforce, it’s going to have negative impact in the economy in unforeseen ways there has been no documentation that any of that has ever come to pass when minimum wage has been increased especially under these proposals that it would be done gradually over several years with an indexing mechanism to follow that. One of the things that I think employers often express the greatest concern about is stability and predictability in what they’re planning. So if we get the minimum wage to a point where it’s reasonable and catch us with the loss to inflation over the years and then adopt indexing from that point on, employers will have the sense of predictability that they often claim is so important for them in business planning.
REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you. Thank you for that response. I think that is very important for folks to recognize that we’ve been at this place before where we’ve raised the minimum wage and I’d argue that the concern that most folks have, some folks have regarding increase in the wage, have not come to pass. It hasn’t killed jobs. It hasn’t done any of those or has any of those negative unintended consequences and so I thank you for your testimony today.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): Thank you, Representative.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you, Senator Looney. Before you testified there were some questions raised from Committee members about the fact that this year there are a number of different Bills that would benefit working families and does it concern you that we’re doing too much by taking on, you know, better healthcare, better wages, paid family leave, you know, how do you see that coming together.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): Well I think we have to look at all these issues in combination. I think that paid family medical leave, an increase in the minimum wage, the scheduling issue all of these I think are important Bills to relate to improving lives, quality of our generally the lower paid part of our workforce so I think that’s awfully important. This morning there was also a press conference on the public option on healthcare insurance so that’s, you know, another piece of that as well because many people now have, they are technically insured but in reality only has catastrophic plans because the only plans that they can afford have high deductibles that they don’t
have general coverage, they only have coverage when the cost gets so high. So when you look at all of these as sort of a part of a general package to try to improve conditions for workers in the State, I think they can be looked at as all interrelated in one way or another.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you and I appreciate your leadership in taking up this package that would make it a better place to live, work and raise our families here in Connecticut, so thank you very much.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you for your testimony today. We’re going to start with the public testimony and we’ll go, we’ll intersperse public officials with public testimony, so first on the list is Sally Grossman. Is Sally here?

SALLY GROSSMAN: Hi, my name is Sally Grossman, I’m from Windsor. I am a small business owner and I strongly support SB 2 and HB 5004.

I own a very small painting company and I pay independent contractors with no experience in construction $15 dollars an hour. I find when you pay people what they are worth, you get better workers. So with me today is one of the amazing women who works for me. She is here to share her story.

DEANNA KELLER: Hello, my name is Deanna Keller and I live in Windsor. I am here to testify in favor of SB 2 and HB 5004.

I’m currently employed as an independent contractor making $15 dollars an hour but for the majority of
my life I worked a minimum wage jobs and for a period of time I was homeless. I’m going to briefly share my story today.

When I was 16 years old I was placed in the custody of DFC. I have worked at many jobs that were minimum wage jobs and I was never able to afford a place of my own. So in November of 2015 I moved into an apartment that was paid for by DCF in full for about seven to eight months and then after that they decreased the amount they paid and I had to cover the rest. I was working 32 hours as an office assistant making minimum wage and I wasn’t able to afford rent and afford to be able eat and buy food. So with that being said, I wasn’t able to afford it so I chose to eat instead of pay rent so my landlord took my security deposit which was $1,300 dollars and I still owed $200 dollars when my lease was up.

In 2017, I started working at Walmart making $11 dollars an hour. I was living paycheck to paycheck and was unable to save money once rent and food was paid for. In May of 2018 I lost my job due to illness and I became homeless. I was only able to get off the street because I ended up having to be rescued by police when my tent was surrounded by flood waters. The Windsor Department of Social Services and members of the community donated money so that I could stay in a local hotel while trying to find a job.

Currently I work as an independent contractor painting houses. I live with my boss while I save up enough money to be able to afford my own place. I need to be able to save up enough money for first and last months’ rent as well as security deposit. There is no way I would be able to do this while
still making minimum wage. Even making $15 dollars an hour it will still be awhile to be able to afford my own place and also save money and that would leave me with no money to purchase furnishings.

I urge you to support SB 2 and HB 5004 to allow residents of CT the ability to earn a livable wage. I also want to say most of the people that are older and are still working minimum wage jobs can’t afford to go to school because they are not making a livable wage. Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you so much for sharing your story with us and, you know, I’m very happy that you are in a position now were you feel like there is hope and you will be able to move into your own place and I also want to thank Sally Grossman for being the kind of employer that you are and we need people like you in our State, so thank you so much. Questions or comments? Representative Polletta.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): Good afternoon to both of you and thank you for being here. This is certainly a very emotion topic to discuss and for you ma’am I understand that it must be very difficult to be up here and to tell your story because it’s never easy admitting that you’re struggling. As a small business owner I see individuals living from paycheck to paycheck and it’s certainly difficult. I think based on what I’ve heard and a lot of the testimony that we’ve received here there has been a lot of talk between what a livable wage is and what a sustainable wage is. In your opinion as somebody who has lived this, what is the difference to you between a livable and sustainable wage?
DEANNE KELLER: I would say a livable wage is basically enough to pay rent and afford food, to be able to live.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): Absolutely. And what about, either one of you, a sustainable wage?

DEANNA KELLER: I think that we all can agree that $15 dollars an hour isn’t nearly enough especially in the State of Connecticut. So I do think it needs to be more, I think a very good first step would be $15 dollars an hour but I think definitely that we are going to need to increase it to more than that.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): Okay. So, exactly that is exactly what I was looking for because, you know, we’ve talked about and we’ve just heard, you know the Senate President up here talk about different ideas that have been put forward this year and certainly they all have merit. I’m not denying that at all but $15 dollars an hour is not enough in Connecticut. It isn’t. We’re gonna patch holes which means you’re gonna be paying hundreds of dollars more to operate on the roads. We’re gonna tell employers they’re gonna need to pay more money, $15 dollars an hour to their employees which means some companies may go automated. I fear that there might be a loss of jobs due to this, that is just my fear personally. But again getting back to my original point which is livable versus sustainable, if the intent and the goal of this Bill is to lift someone out of poverty and get them to what is a livable wage I think the three of us would agree that $15 dollars an hour wouldn’t do it in the State of Connecticut and that’s what I fear is that it may result in less jobs and unfortunately not accomplish what we’re trying to accomplish here.
SALLY GROSSMAN: I’m a little confused. Are you saying that because $15 dollars an hour isn’t enough to live on then we should just keep it at $10.10?

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): I fear that if we raise the minimum wage there is going to even less jobs at that price. So, we’ve heard, will hear the testimony throughout the day from some employers across the State of Connecticut, I think one of which and we will bring it up is just an article that came out today from MGM Casino that has automated bartenders. I wonder if those bartenders that are working that job, that’s their primary job, right, so they are looking to support their family off that job. If they lose that job where would they go so while I understand $15 dollars an hour is not nearly enough to make it by, I fear that if you don’t even have the $10.10 or $11 dollars or whatever it may be, I’m sure the Bill will change as it goes forward, that we’re gonna have more situations like this and we won’t accomplish what we want from this Bill is all I’m saying. I do agree that $15 dollars an hour is not enough to live in the State of Connecticut. Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I actually was impressed Ms. Grossman that you asked the question that was on my mind while Representative Polletta was speaking because there is something illogical about saying $15 dollars is not enough to live on so therefore we should keep it at $10.10 and I think that before you testified there was testimony about automation and the fact that automation will come if it’s possible, there will be automation because there is always a drive for technology to increase profits and so I’m not sure I’ve seen the link in that as well. I appreciate that what you’ve testified about is the
difficulty of living even on $15 dollars an hour and if Representative Polletta thinks we should raise it more, I’m glad to entertain that Amendment [Laughter]. Thank you.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): Excuse me, at least we have it on the record, thank you. [Laughter].

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Okay. Any other questions? Thank you very much for your testimony. Next we have Steven Hernandez. Good to see you again here.

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: Good to see you. My name is Steven Hernandez. I am the Executive Director of the Legislature’s Commission on Women, Children and Seniors in Equity and Opportunity. It’s an honor to testify here today before you on the $15 dollars an hour minimum wage Bills.

So we have the honor this morning of being with Philanthropy and the Governor and there was a presentation by one of the heads at the Boston Fed out of the Federal Reserve in Boston and the discussion was around what are we doing so that our families can help lift themselves sustainably out of poverty. For the last few years we have been working, the commission has been working on an initiative called The Two Generational Initiative where we really focus on the family and a family’s sustainability and we found a few things. We found that in Connecticut and this is information from the Boston Fed that we received just this morning, so it’s hot off the presses, 31 percent of all workers make less than $15 dollars an hour in Connecticut, 41 percent of those workers are Black, 54 percent of those workers are Latino, of all less of the $15 dollars an hour workers 49 percent work in retail, healthcare or restaurants, 57 percent are at least
30 years old, 61 percent are fulltime workers and 22 percent of children in this State have parents making less than $15 dollars an hour.

You know, when you are part of so many different conversations around helping lift families sustainably out of poverty, to your point, Representative Polletta, $15 dollars isn’t enough. In fact a living wage for a family of four in the State of Connecticut is closer to $31 dollars. So what I wonder is and what I think when I think about those numbers they’re so stark in that we have to have an all hands approach when we’re thinking about lift families sustainably out of poverty.

There is a worker shortage in the State of Connecticut. There is a skill shortage in State of Connecticut but at the same time our families what to work. We learn that they want to work because we learned about this thing called the Benefit Cliff which is families are entrepreneurially deciding not to make one more dollar because they know they are going to lose the childcare. They are entrepreneurially deciding that they are not going to take one more skill set because they know it might get them a raise and they may lose health care supports. We are forcing families to entrepreneurial on their own because we don’t have a fulsome vision for how it is we can make $16, 20, $25, $31 dollar workers out of the people in the State of Connecticut. Fifteen dollars an hour is one strategy along with many other strategies that we have to put together in this State to life our workers. We have to ensure that workers have access to training, apprenticeships so that our families are not working just to survive.
You know, there is a certain romanticism about the $15 dollars an hour worker. It’s the kid whose working over the summer just to raise a little bit of money to have, you know, shoes for next semester. It’s the billionaire whose is volunteering their time to work on behalf of the people of the State of Connecticut but no one else can live on that amount of money, no one and so many of the people in the State are. So I wanted to just, you know, I want you to know that as a commission we are supporting all efforts that will help lift families sustainably out of poverty, $15 dollars by the way, will butt us against what we know to be a benefit cliff in the State of Connecticut. That means that by lifting people to $15 dollars some of those people are goin to lose benefits. The answer to me is not therefore let’s not do it, the answer to me is how do we work together to bridge that benefit gap, the answer to me is we need to get busy between the day this legislature votes for $15 dollar and the day that the incremental increases are achieved.

We need to get busy because if we do nothing in the interim all we are going to see is more families who are falling behind. So I thank you for the opportunity to testify here. I will note that together with your Committee on April 18th, we will actually be hosting, and thank you, Representative Porter for your leadership on this, we will be hosting the Boston Fed here in the State of Connecticut where we will talk, we will have a wholesome discussion about benefit cliffs and how we can work together to actually bridge those. There are a couple of initiatives that the Fed is working on here in the State of Connecticut, The Working Cities Initiative. There are other initiatives that
your colleagues are considering and having placed base supports for the cities that have historically over the last few years diminished not only as places where we can go to find opportunity but engines and drivers of the economies of the State. So I look forward to seeing you there. I look forward to working with you on all of these ways we can support our workers in the State of Connecticut, $15 dollars an hour is the beginning of a conversation that needs to go much, much further.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. I think you addressed some of the questions I had earlier about, you know, how does this come together as a package. I’ll tell you I have only recently sat on this side of the table and I used to be on that side of the table and one of the things I remember being very frustrated about was being at the legislature and lobbying people and asking about, you know, several Bills and hearing, well we’re just gonna get one Bill this year, so you pick which one do you want and that was always very frustrating to me because I think you just addressed the issue, if you only do one thing sometimes you’re not really accounting for, you know, helping over here might hurt over there and I think that we are trying to take more holistic approach to it this year and pass several Bills that will lift working families so in addition to minimum wage, I know you’ve been here when we talked about things like paid family leave and I know on-call scheduling is a really important piece of this for part-time workers so I do believe that holistic approach is absolutely necessary at this time even though I agree with Representative Polletta that $15 dollars isn’t enough.
STEVEN HAERNANDEZ: Thank you so much for that and speaking of holistic approaches, you know, we were so heartened this morning that the Governor was actually part of the conversation with Philanthropy, this the Connecticut Council of Philanthropy leading a discussion of the future of partnerships with philanthropy, leveraging their resources in order to improve the lots of families, working families, and families that just want to make ends meet in the State of Connecticut and part of that conversation was, that conversation was all about innovation. It was really all about creating that connective tissue between the people who want to work and the places that need people to work. You know, I’m a Texan and I don’t often at the South longingly, I’m grateful that I am here, but, you know, when the State of Tennessee for instance and I’ve mentioned this to a couple of colleagues, the State of Tennessee invited Nissan to collocate with one of its local colleges where important skills to be able to function and work at a livable wage in Nissan were being trained right for young people and families right across the street. That is an innovation, the type of innovation that we should be doing here in the State of Connecticut. Nissan was getting workers, the State was employing its people. You know we actually took a tour of the learning facility that looked like a Nissan plant. The only thing that was missing and the thing I think we can do better is there were mostly boys in that space and there should have been more young women. But I think if we think innovatively and out of the box in all of these different ways I think we can make real headway and we can create $31 dollar workers out of the people in the State of Connecticut because they are worth much more than that.
SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you, I appreciate your bringing it all together. I know we are going to have a little more conversation about Nissan however [Laughter]. They could be a little bit better on labor rights and the right of workers to collectively bargain.

STEVE HERNANDEZ: Well, I’ll tell you good point. Thank you so much because, you know, we have Amazon right next door and Amazon is located, has one of the biggest facilities right there in Windsor and right next to that facility is empty land. Imagine if we were to work with Amazon with innovative ways to train families, collocate a Care 4 Kids right in that area and really have engines of productivity happening with one of our biggest now employers in the state. We should be doing the same thing in different parts of the State.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I totally agree, I just would add again the piece that when we are bringing companies to Connecticut and affording them sometimes tax breaks, we ought to look at making sure that they are allowing their workers to engage in and organizing in collective bargaining without fear of intimidation. It is a whole picture. I know you appreciate that.

STEVE HERNANDEZ: Well I certainly do and I have to tell you on providing tax breaks for large multinational corporations to come to Connecticut or to come anywhere in any state seems regressive to me. They need our workers.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): Well thank you, Senator. And Mr. Hernandez thank you for being here. I certainly respect the work that you do and, you know, on this Committee I tell you this all the time that there is a lot of passionate issues that we’re talking about here, we may not agree on all of them but we can certainly have a civil discussion and take into consideration all viewpoints. You mentioned about the $31 dollars an hour for the family of four, so I am interested in again going back to sustainable versus livable. I am of the opinion that $15 dollars an hour is not a livable wage in the State of Connecticut. I am also of the same opinion to reference the Senator here and what we talk about that the government should not mandate that we have a livable wage. I don’t agree with that. What I am of the opinion and what my belief is, is that we create an environment that is conducive for job growth so larger companies like I believe it was Aetna here in Hartford just said they’re gonna implement the $15 dollars an hour minimum wage which was awesome without us even passing a law. So, you know, I don’t think that a single person in this room or in the State of Connecticut wants to work for $15 dollars an hour minimum wage if that is where they are gonna stop. I think they strive to do better like you said. So I want to see businesses partner up with skilled workers, apprentices coming out of a trade school, like electricians, plumbers and carpenters that they start them at a certain wage, whatever that may be, we are going to debate that one when we vote on the Bill but they raised them quickly after they proved themselves, way above $15 dollars an hour because again $15 dollars an hour you can’t make it in Connecticut. Once we start implementing all of the polices that we’ve been
talking about, it’s gonna cost you far more than $15 dollars an hour to live in Connecticut and if the small businesses do what they say they’re going to do if this Bill passes which is to raise prices across the board, then whatever wage increase we see here could get wiped out, that is my fear. So I think we should be doing everything we can to encourage the businesses to hire people at more than $15 dollars an hour and again there’s a huge debate here, two sides of the aisle, about what is the minimum someone should make and I am sympathetic to that because I understand the $10.10 is, what is it at the end of the week, $450 dollars, I mean come on. We know, everyone sitting in this room knows that $450 dollars a week is not enough to support yourself, a family of two, a family of three, a family of four. You can’t even pay your rent on $450 dollar a week and you can’t pay your rent on $15 dollars whatever it comes out to at $15 dollars an hour $650 dollars a week. So the only real option here, well there’s two options, we either raise this thing up to $30 dollars an hour and say this is what it costs to live in the State of Connecticut or we start to take a serious approach of partnering with businesses across the state so they hire people at higher than $15, maybe $20-$25 dollars an hour so they can truly support their family. And that is really my opinion here because I really feel bad for the worker that is making $10.10 working two jobs that can’t even go home at the end of the week with $50 dollars in their back account. I really do. And I don’t think they’re gonna see much more with $15 dollars an hour so when does it end? That’s the question. So, you know, I thank you for being up here and again its passionate and I love to hear people perspectives, I know most
of the people on this list are in support of this Bill and, you know, I wait to see the final product. I don’t want to decide one way of the other but I really think it is important to keep into your mind that the workforce, in this state that is looking to work a job at $15 dollars an hour is gonna struggle in the same way that someone making $10 dollars, or $11 dollars or $12 dollars is going to struggle and that is my fear and with this increase going up with the, what is it, the consumer price index, it increases automatically without a vote from the legislature, I guess there is merit to that argument because now we won’t be back here debating this Bill again and perhaps that is what the intention is here is to just have it keep going up every year but what will happen when it reaches $22 dollars of $23 dollars and then again a company goes to something automated or a company says look, I can’t do business here anymore, I’m gonna close. The loss of workers could be dramatic so I’ll continue to listen to the debate but I’m just very hesitant to say I support $15 dollars an hour because of what I have heard around my district in the state but thank you for your testimony. You certainly bring a perspective each time you’re here and I appreciate it and I’m takin note, so, I listen. thank you.

STEVE HERNANDEZ: Thank you, sir. To your point I am relatively agnostic about what whether resource trickles down or trickles up. But in the line of business I am I really focus on the trickling up and, you know, when you have place based initiatives, especially in our cities where a lot of poverty is concentrated in the State of Connecticut place based initiatives such as apprenticeships for workers, when you have literacy for little ones,
financial literacy for people who live in cities that they can go from renting to owning and also good transportation options not only in and out of town but across town, cause sometimes its hard to get from one end of the city to the other than it is to get from here to New Britton. But I think when you have an investment in the people who live in cities together with stragglers of having good corporate citizens contribute to the prosperity of the worker of the state, you bring all of those things together then I just don’t see a trickling down but I see a trickling up as well so that resources are in the pockets of more and more of our workers. So, you know, it is an all hands on deck approach and I appreciate you saying that.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): Thank you and this bring me to just one quick point, if I may, I believe I read somewhere that New York City had implemented a minimum wage that was higher than the rest of the state. Would you support a bill that perhaps implement a higher minimum wage for our cities and then would exclude let’s say, you know, smaller towns, places where necessarily there isn’t so much development because I know New York City did it and it seems to be working well, is that something that you would support or acknowledge?

STEVE HERNANDEZ: I appreciate that, you know, one of the perils of looking at Connecticut from very, very high up is that we miss the fact that so many of our towns are, our small towns also have great disparities in wealth and in fact it often to the benefit of the have mores that there be some have nots nearby so that they can work and work on their lands and work for them and so, I don’t know that I would take that approach because they are quite
pockets of poverty in this State just like the achievement gap can be found in every part of the State from sunny Greenwich all the way to the quiet corner so to can poverties. So I don’t know that I would take that approach necessarily.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Representative Porter.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Madam Chair and thank you Mr. Hernandez for your testimony, sorry I missed most of it, but I can pretty much imagine what you went with it. We talk about, and I’ve heard, you know, part of this conversation and it’s a lot of collateral consequences that are not taken into consideration and when we talk about things like the benefits cliff and that’s why we’re gonna work to make sure we get that right, right. I keep hearin that $15 dollars is not enough, you know, that $15 dollars is not going to get us where we need to be but as mom who was the voice and ended up being the single parent for many years, workin two and three jobs to make ends meet, I know what it is not to have two nickels to rub together and for somebody to hand me a five dollar bill feels like 50, a $10 dollar bill feels like $100 dollars so I think we have to put that into perspective as well. What people are truly experiencin now a days. I even have my grandfather, God bless his soul, before he passed he was like, “I did better back in the 20s than you all are doin right now.” This is really scary the direction we’re headed in, so I think and you may have addressed this, but how important is it that we take all these things into consideration and that we do link, you know, minimum wage, paid leave, on-call, the public option for small businesses, I mean because we understand and are very sympathetic
to small businesses. I know I am. I know my Co-Chair is and many of the people on this Committee, all of the people I would venture to say. So how do we get there, right without hurting the ones that are gonna suffer and I will say this before I let you answer, there is going to be some growing pains people. This is what happens and we have a majority of people that have gained back jobs since the recession that are makin minimum wage so housin is goin up, utilities are goin up, daycare is goin up, mortgages are going up, car insurance is goin up, I mean anything that you can think about, cost of livin overall has gone up but wages have remained stagnant. People have learned, had to learn to do more with less and I think, you know, now is time for us to expand that, it’s a shared experience. Yeah, just tell me what your thoughts are around that because this has been a lot of the argument and a lot of the pushback and a lot of the opposition and I was just asked the same question by Channel 8 News and I’m tryin to really understand how to deliver the message in a way that everybody get is, even the ones that don’t have the experience because a lot of the pushback is comin from people that don’t have the experience that these workers are experencin day in and day out. Through you, Madam Chair.

STEVE HERNANDEZ: Well I’ll tell in our work with the ALICE families, asset limited income constrained but employed families, we hear time and again that five dollars an hour, any amount of money more than what they have in their pocket today would make the difference between having a meal and being able to buy medication and a gallon of milk, a loaf of bread and a stick of butter, if you remember that. That
is a real difference. And unfortunately, you know, it isn’t enough $15 dollars is not enough in the State of Connecticut but I think your point to the segment of our State and it’s a big segment of our state who but for, you know, the important benefits that they have, but for that little extra money, they would not make it in the State of Connecticut of Connecticut. So I think you’re right. I appreciate your point. I would never say that just because it is not enough we shouldn’t do it because I’ll tell you what, there are families that are listening on the television right now who five more dollars an hour would make a whole lot of difference, it’s a world of difference.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Actually not just listening on the television but right here in this room, I’m sure there are many of you in this room who we’re talking about and I am sympathetic to how this must feel to you to hear this discussion and we need to acknowledge how hard it is to live on $10.10 and how hard it will be to live on $15 dollars but how much better it would be to have $15 dollars in your pocket, so thank you. Representative Hall.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Hernandez just quickly, do you know in your testimony you broke down the demographics of those who make less or make minimum wage, can you just go over that one more time?

STEVE HERNANDEZ: So sure, this is from the Boston Fed this morning. So who makes less than $15 dollars an hour in Connecticut? Thirty-one percent of all workers, 41 percent of Black workers and 54 percent of Latino workers. Of all less of the $15 dollars an hour workers 49 percent work in retail,
healthcare or restaurants, 57 percent are at least 30 years old, 61 percent are fulltime workers and 22 percent of children in the State of Connecticut State have parents making less than $15 dollars an hour.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you. Thank you for that, I think that’s just important for folks to really have that resonate. But was it also broken down by gender?

STEVE HERNANDEZ: Not on this slide and not on the presentation this morning but, you know, what’s interesting we find this in the work we do in the Commission on Women, Children and Seniors and the Commission of Equity and Opportunity whenever there is a disparity, whenever there is a disparity there is not one place where this isn’t true, for women the disparity is worse, for women of color it’s even worse so it is, it’s always important I think to reiterate that but, you know, I don’t forget race and ethnicity when I think about these issues because Connecticut is perhaps not peculiar in this way but a lot of the issues, you can overlay poverty almost always very neatly with race and ethnicity and I say almost because as I said there are places in Connecticut, some of our rural areas, where there are very, very poor people of general population and we always acknowledge that.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Representative Porter.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Just quickly to piggyback off our Representative Hall and your response, I actually looked into wage growth by race and ethnicity because as a person of color, a Black
woman specifically, I know that this exists, I have experienced it and it says that wage growth since 2000 was faster for White and Hispanic workers that for Black voters, workers. Over the last 18 years wage growth for White and Hispanic workers has been about four times faster than that of Black workers in 20th through 70th percentiles of their respective wage distributions, so there is definitely a huge disparity and if you look at it by gender it’s even larger. So, we go through this, we pass the pay equity Bill last year because women just don’t make the same dollar that a man makes and it decreased as you look at Black, Latinos, can’t say Asians because they actually make more than White women but there is a disparity so, I just wanted to put that on the record and reemphasize what Representative Hall is trying to drive home that even though we fix things on the surface that benefits people as a whole, we still need to look at how people of color in this state and nationally are disproportionally impacted even with an increase.

STEVE HERNANDEZ: Well, I’ll tell you what, this isn’t the Education Committee but if you will allow me an education moment, when we first started looking into why Connecticut might have the largest achievement gap in the country it was very clear that kids of color were disproportionately impacted by the achievement gap here in Connecticut. There was an important statistic that quietly made it’s way through, as a thread, a through thread in our discussions on the achievement gap and it was that when poor children of the general population, when their families improve their economic situation the kids academic situation improves with them almost hand-in-hand. Similarly with Latinos. With
African-American they did not and 98 percent of kids can learn to read, 98 percent can thrive. So what was the data telling us about the economic situation of a Black family improving, the academic situation of a Black child doesn’t necessarily and in fact the fact that a African-American couple can have a child and improve their wealth and their status in society it does not guarantee that their sons will have the same fate.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Any questions or comments? Well that last comment was jarring and one that we have to think about more and I think understand better so that these are the kinds of problems we have to fix in this State. So, thank you very much for your testimony today. Next we have up Mara Morales. Welcome.

MARA MORALES: Good afternoon, Members of the Committee. I am here to testify in support of SB 2 and HB 5004, two Bills that raise the minimum wage to $15 dollars 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 34BJ. When I started we only earned $5.15 an hour. I only took home $220 dollars a week. That was a longtime ago it’s true, and the cost of living was lower but it still 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 may times, many times. We have fought hard to make a better living. Now I make $17.70 an hour.
My husband works in a restaurant as a Sous chef. We are better but we are not rich. We have bought a 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 neighbors, for our friends. We have joined together with other unions and with others who do not have a union to fight for minimum wage to $15 dollars.

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

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you for your testimony and particularly thank you for acknowledging that some of us who are newly elected we got here because of the voices like yours that care so much about these issues, so I know I’m not gonna forget that. Thank you for being here. I think the issues you raised and the progress that you maid it’s good to know you made that progress, but it is hard to know that it took you 20 years to get there, so that’s a longtime. Comments or questions? Thank you so much for your testimony. Next we have Senator Winfield here. Hello.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): Hello. Good afternoon I am mostly going to let Leo do his testimony. I did want to say that I hope that at the end of this session I am not the last Labor Chair to pass a minimum wage increase because that has been awhile.
I also wanted to talk a little bit about the conversation earlier about the study in Seattle because I remember paying attention to that since the issue was something that I pay attention to. I remember reading in the Washington Post about this reduction in wages and actually what Jacob Vigdor one of the economists said was that the wage, the number of hours went up for those with the minimum wage increase by seven hours and a quarter but that was less than the rest of the state and that’s how they perceived it to be a reduction in wages. It seems to me to still be an increase in wages just to clarify that and also from that same study, there was the analysis that 73 cents of the increase that by 2015 had gone into place went towards the improvement of the workers and additional 45 percent when in to improve the economy so I think we have to take those things into consideration when we talk about that study.

One other thing before I turn it over to Leo Gertner, we do talk about those young people who are in the economy working and whether they should be treated differently. I would like to say that not every community is the same and while some people may be working to put some money in their pockets, some peoples’ money never goes into their pockets because they have to supplement the home. So I will now introduce Leo Gertner from the National Employment Law Project.

LEO GERTNER: Thank you Senator Winfield. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you Members of the Committee for the opportunity to be here in Connecticut today. My name is Leo Gertner and I am a staff attorney for the National Employment Law Project. We are a non-profit and nonpartisan
advocacy organization focusing on employment policy including unemployment insurance, beyond demand economy and what is relevant for today’s hearing the minimum wage. We are based in New York and we have offices in Washington, D.C. where I am based and other parts of the country.

What we’ve seen at NELP is that the effective minimum wage increases has had across the country is extremely positive. Since 2012, 22 million workers have received $68 billion dollars in raises across the country. Most of that has been in states and cities that have already adopted the $15 dollar minimum wage or are past the $15 dollars like New York, California, Massachusetts. New Jersey and Illinois have now joined that group very recently as you probably know from the news. Workers in these states can now afford better food, better health care, clothes for the kids, repairs for their cars, school tuition and other goods and services that are crucial for the economy and crucial for the wellbeing of workers and their ability to live long lives with dignity and these services and good were out of reach before. And in these place both workers and businesses are thriving making up for years and decades of stagnant wage growth.

And I want to note, you know, very clearly here on the record that five states where $15 dollars has been adopted as a plan, they have done so without any new carveouts and without any kind of training wage. There has been some discussion in some of these states about youth wage but those were roundly defeated. There has been no discussion of across the board training wage so these are clean $15 bills for the most part.
You know, we are in strong support of SB2 and HB 5004 because nowhere in Connecticut is less than $15 dollars an hour enough to live on. Even as a single adult without children, you know, and yet here we are at $10.10 an hour which translates to only $21,000 dollars a year. A $15 dollar minimum wage would raise pay for at least 330,000 workers across the state and as others have noted most of these workers are adults and they are disproportionally women and African-American, Latino workers. By increasing the minimum wage as what we find to be a manageable rate for businesses everyone in the state can thrive and that is why Connecticut could also benefit greatly from reversing years of losses for workers. We urge you to vote in favor of these Bills. Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Representative Polletta.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): Thank you, sir for being here and offering your perspective this afternoon. Just a few quick questions you talked about a clean $15 dollars an hour bill and the good Senator talked about the youth. I don’t know if we are going to disregard the youth or we are saying that maybe they don’t perhaps matter as much as someone that’s working for their livelihood at this minimum wage but I happen to represent a district in which right next door to me is an amusement park. I value my youth in my community and a lot of those individuals work at that amusement park over the summer and we’ve already been told that the jobs will diminish. My fear here is that, as you just said, the clean $15 dollars an hour Bill would then result in less work, again just focusing on our youth for one minute because we’ve talked, you know, broadly about
this the entire day. You know, a lot of what we do here in the building we go back to our districts and we tell, you know, our folks okay, we did this, we fought for this, we approved that. How do I go back to a district and tell all of my parents that are sitting there that say, hey my kid needs a summer job, I don’t want him sitting home playing Mine Craft all day or on Facebook, I want ‘em out, I want ‘em workin, I want ‘em being productive members of society? How do I tell them that now perhaps one of the bigger, larger employers of season part-time those jobs are not gonna be there anymore? That’s what I struggle with, part of what I struggle with, with this Bill.

LEO GERTNER: Representative, I appreciate your concern but I would say that at this point that is very speculative to say that those jobs aren’t going to be there. All the research that we’ve seen, like my colleague from The Economic Policy Institute has cited has show no effect on youth employment. I would also add that, you know, maybe we have a difference of opinion about what it means to value youth because I believe that valuing youth means that you pay them the same because it is the same work that other people are doing and those youths are also supporting their families, they are saving money for school, they are paying for their own expenses. They desire just as much of a shot at a good livelihood as anybody else. I would also add that creating a two-tier system essentially you create a second class wage in the state. That is more burdensome for enforcement, that sends the wrong message to people because I think, you know, we believe in equality, I think we all do and also labor costs have essentially been artificially
frozen for years and decades. You know if anything businesses have gotten a huge subsidy because while other costs go up labor costs have stayed constant or even with inflation have gone down so the workers are really carrying the businesses and I think it is time to bring them up to what I believe is the very bare minimum that they deserve and economic research backs.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): If I might for a second, I think the last time that we endeavored to increase the minimum wage the same thing was said, the same thing is always said. I’m not discounting that people believe that but is always said and even if you have a training wage, the training wage does increase, right? So that’s going to be part of the conversation. I think as legislators we have to not only represent our district but never forget that we are a part of the body as a whole. So we deal with the issues of the State as a whole and that is part of what we wrestle with and if we’re dealing with that, some of that information that Steve Hernandez talked about is important here. So those differences based on race or gender, those differences are not just in the adult population but those differences exist in the population of our youth. So when I talk about the youth who are not just putting money in their pockets the youth that are supplementing their parents wage because we refuse to raise the wage to where it should be, that’s important for us to remember and I think part of the duty we have is to go back to our district and explain. I walk into the building believing one thing, I’ve learned it, and we may not agree anymore but it is important for you to know why we are taking the actions we’re taking.
REP. POLLETTA (68TH): Senator thank you so much and you’ve proved my point, I mean you said are supplementing their parent’s income, we want them to work, we want them to out there and we want them to have a job and for all intent and purposes I think we’ve heard from the small business community, you know, my district alone is many small businesses including a neighboring amusement part but we’re heard that it will result in less job for our youth.

But the next point I’d like to make is, you know, we’re heard about our surrounding states so could you just talk briefly about where we fit into New England in terms of our minimum wage because I know we’ve heard, I asked Representative a few people ago, few persons ago whether or not we were in the top tier of our minimum wage, I think she couldn’t answer it. Is there a chart or in you opinion, not in your opinion but a fact that we are lagging far behind New England in terms of raising the minimum wage?

LEO GERTNER: Well Rhode Island is at $10.10, Massachusetts is at $12 dollars and going to $15 dollars. New York is not part of New England I understand but most of the state is going towards, well the entire state is going towards $15 dollars. Downstate which is most immediately next to Connecticut is going to be at $10 dollars by 2021 so every soon. Vermont has, I know that the Vermont senate has passed the 15 Bill, New Hampshire is considering one. Maine is I believe at $12 dollars or heading towards $12 dollars. So I think it is fair to say that like Connecticut is towards the back of the pack right now.
REP. POLLETTA (68TH): Okay and speaking of New Hampshire they had passed the minimum wage bill, are you familiar with that, that they passed a minimum wage bill a number of years back that actually increased the minimum wage about the national average and then subsequently repealed it and brought it down to the Federal minimum wage of I think $7.34 an hour, $7.25 what is it? Okay. Could you speak to that at all as to why they would have repealed it?

LEO GERTNER: I didn’t follow that closely so I don’t want to speculate why they did or didn’t. I mean I think it is a controversial political issue and, you know, folks there decided to repeal it but now, I think there is a very sustained effort for just like here to increase the minimum wage because $7.25 doesn’t take, you know, a PhD in math to know its much lower than $10.10.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): So my guess, my educated guess, I’ve only been here a couple of years, but my guess is that bill was repealed because it wasn’t working and my guess is that the cost of living was high in that state and that increase was not working. Now maybe I’m proved wrong, it’s an educated guess, I read an article on it just yesterday so I’m certainly willing to listen but I would hate to have to see our legislature raise its minimum wage and then have to renege on it if we say, its not working, businesses are laying off folks, small businesses across our districts aren’t hiring our youth and/or people that really need the jobs. So I, just again, I’m fearful moving forward that it may result in less jobs but I do understand the statistics and where you’re coming from and again I am willing to listen to the debate, I’m just...
pointing out how that state right next to us happened to rescind that after a couple of years of it being in order.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): Representative, I would just remind you as I started off this was part of the conversation several years ago when we increased the minimum wage. People expressed the same fears, did not want us to raise the minimum wage and potentially have to go backwards, did not want jobs to be lost and here we’re sitting talking about raising the minimum wage again.

LEO GERTNER: You know, I would just add some concrete examples, you know, in the states that have raised the minimum wage in this year, it’s been about 19 states and over 20 cities have raised the minimum wage. Generally speaking we have seen unemployment rates fall faster actually in states that raise the minimum wage. We’ve also seen worker earnings for the lowest ten percent of workers increase much faster than in states that haven’t increased the minimum wage. To just give one very, I think example that make my point is jarring to me at least that income earnings for women increased four percent, you know, average in states that raise the minimum wage and in states that didn’t increase pretty much zero. So women weren’t just staying put, they were falling behind. So it’s really a necessary, it’s a very necessary measure.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you very much for your testimony. Any other questions or comments? Representative Porter.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Well first I want to thank both of you for being here to testify today and for sharin the information that you shared. I think you
drive home a lot of what we’ve been trying to say in a very concrete way. We keep comin back to this trainin wage and I just want to make the one point that we don’t have different health and safety standards for newer young workers. Workers’ comp statutes don’t have different standards for newer younger workers. It’s against the law to discriminate, so I don’t think we should allow employers to pay younger workers less money because you’ve stated it, I’ve stated it, and other people have stated it work is work and there is dignity in work and if you are able to do the work, you should be able to get the same pay as the next person, no matter what their age is, you know, and the pushback around the low level work, that’s the frontline work. You don’t get to make the dollars, you don’t get to the profits, without havin a restaurant that has clean dishes, right. You don’t get to serve food on dirty dishes. I don’t think we should be discountin the work or the employees age. If they are capable of doin it they should be able to do it and the argument around the training that goes into it, as adults I know a lot of jobs I went into those are 90-day trial you were on. And if you didn’t do what they needed you to do and you weren’t able to catch up and get on board and perform at an adequate level in 90-days you were gone. So I mean that’s something that needs to be taken into consideration as well and I just wanted to state that for the record because it’s getting a little exhausting hearin about the training wage and thank you for makin the point that that would actually make the State of Connecticut an outlier when it comes to the other five states that have already done this. So Thank you, Madam Chair.
SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Seeing no other questions or comments, thank you for your testimony today, you’re very helpful. Next we have up Sal Luciano.

SAL LUCIANO: Good afternoon Representative Porter, Senator Kushner and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Sal Luciano and I am proud to serve as the President of the Connecticut AFL-CIO, a federation of hundreds of local unions representing more than 220,000 members in the private sector, public sector, and building trades. I actually have written testimony on seven Bills but I am going to spend most of my time talking about the support for Senate Bill 2 and House Bill 5004 AN ACT INCREASING THE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE.

Connecticut was the first state to adopt a $10.10 minimum wage. Once a leader, we now lag behind. Who earns minimum wage? Teenagers are not the majority. In fact, the average age of a minimum wage worker is 36 and more than 89% are age 20 or older. They have families, about 27 percent of low wage workers are parents compared with 34 percent of all workers. Women and minorities are over represented. According to EPI modeling based on data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 332,000 Connecticut workers, 18.7 percent of the state workforce make less than $15 dollars per hour. Raising the minimum wage is important to help close racial pay gaps.

Connecticut’s Low Wage Employer Advisory Board, a thirteen-member panel created by the General Assembly, conducted exhaustive outreach and research efforts on this issue. The Board heard from workers, businesses, economists and policy experts. In December 2016 it concluded in its report that the
state’s minimum wage should be raised to $15 dollars, phased in gradually just as Senate Bill 2 and House Bill 5004 provides.

In order for our economy to grow, families need to thrive as well. One does not work without the other. For that to happen, workers need to earn a fair wage. Minimum wage workers typically spend the vast majority of their earnings in their local communities, shopping at retail establishments, paying rent and childcare fees and accessing public transportation. Simple economics dictates that raising the minimum wage would boost the state's income and sales tax revenue collections without raising taxes.

Claiming the "free market" will take care of wage growth is a myth. Businesses do not rely on the free market to set wages. They lobby federal, state and local governments for direct and indirect assistance, such as tax credits, abatements, guaranteed loans and other incentives.

The White House Council of Economic Advisers promised that last year's federal corporate tax cuts from 36 percent to 20 percent and the small businesses deduction for pass-through entities would translate to wage growth, resulting in an increase of at least $4,000 per year in average household income. However, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, average hourly earnings have decreased 0.2% since the tax cuts were enacted.

Raising wages benefits society. In addition to helping hardworking employees make ends meet, raising the minimum wage can also have a positive impact on reducing recidivism rates and improving workers mental health and reducing rates of child
neglect. Workers who are more are less reliant on safety net services, child care subsidies, energy assistance, SNAP, HUSKY, housing assistance, etc., saving taxpayers dollars for other investments.

A job should lift someone out of poverty, not trap them in it. We urge the Committee to act swiftly and favorably on SB 2 and HB 5004 so that hard working women and men can get the raise they so desperately need and our economy can benefit from the much needed economic boost that comes from wage growth. Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Mr. Luciano. Any comments or questions from the Committee? Okay, well I have one and I’m going to speculate that you can answer this and if you can’t that’s fine. We talk about index the minimum wage, can you just state for the record why that is important?

SAL LUCIANO: By indexing the minimum wage, it one, brings some surety to businesses in terms of the fact that they will know what the employer costs are but the other is had we’d done this 50 years ago the wage right now would be around $24 dollars an hour and we wouldn’t be having this discussion and people wouldn’t be worried whether they could put food on their table or keep a roof over their head.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you for that seeing no further comments or question. I’m sorry, Representative Vargas.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Yes, I’d just like Madam Chair, thank you for the opportunity. I just wanted to make a comment, I am very happy to see you here today, Mr. Luciano. I think that the AFL-CIO is doing a great job. I think you have to, the labor
movement as a whole has been a counterbalance to all the greed I’ve seen in this country. I appreciate your efforts and I’m going to redouble my efforts to make sure that we get that Bill through, the $15 dollars an hour does become the minimum wage in the State of Connecticut. As you’ve stated it’s longtime coming. I tell people, when people say, isn’t that a big jump going from $10.10 to $15 dollars an hour, I’ll tell ya if we had been doing it the way you say, you know 25 cents here, 50 cents there, it would have hardly been felt and people would be much better off, would have been better off all these past years and we wouldn’t be having these contentious discussion. And what I always like to say is if we wait, the longer we wait, the wider the gap becomes between $10.10 and whatever a living wage is and then the same argument, the same old arguments gets recycled over again. This time they say, well if the living wage becomes $25 dollars how do we go from $10 dollars to $25 dollars, it’s impossible, we’ll bankrupt businesses. We will never get ourselves there if we don’t start closing that gap, so I appreciate your testimony. Keep up the good work. Thank you, Madam Chair.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Representative Vargas and thank you, Mr. Luciano. Up next we have Representative Brandon McGee and Kyra Franklin the Fifth Assembly District, are they in the room? No. Juan Hernandez, 34BJ. Good afternoon, Mr. Hernandez. Buenos tardes.

JUAN HERNANDEZ: Good afternoon, Madam Chair. Thank you to the Labor Committee for the opportunity to testify today. We have [infant giggling and laughter] one of my members. We have heard a lot about the statistics. I am going to try to stay
away from that. In Connecticut we represent 4,500 members cleaners and security offices. Around the East Coast we represent 163,000 members.

When you talk about minimum wage increases in Massachusetts, New Jersey and New York we have been in the front of that fight in all those states. I want to give you a number of what the Economic Policy Institute Family Budget calculation is for a family in Hartford, West Hartford or East Hartford a single person needs to make $37,686 dollars to survive today. That $13.36 dollars an hour and we are at $10.10. So when we say that increasing the minimum wage to $15 dollars, I want to clear this out. We are not saying $15 minimum wage today, we are saying $15 dollar minimum wage by 2023. So let’s not believe that this thing is gonna happen tomorrow because that’s not what’s happening here.

The sense I get sitting down here for the last few hours, is that people believe that this will happen right away and that is not the case. This thing will not be done tomorrow, $15 dollars will happen later.

The other thing I want to raise here is that in Connecticut 77 percent of the Latino workforce makes minimum wage and 76 percent of the Black folk make minimum wage. So what happened here in Connecticut? We just went through a big election and minimum wage was one of those issues that was debated in this election. And guess what? The people that are promoting minimum wage won. I see this as a referendum of the past election that people in the State of Connecticut are ready for a minimum wage of $15 dollars. So, it means that people in the State of Connecticut are gonna lose jobs because that was the same debate that we had a few years back when we
raised the minimum wage to $10.10. It’s time for a minimum wage of $15 dollars an hour and it’s time so we go will go right to the labor of the board of this state by a big majority needs a path to minimum wage. Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you. You’re very welcome. Any comments or questions? Yes, Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman. Good afternoon, thanks for being here. So I want, when I look at the sign-up sheet, I see SEIU 32 next to your name, is that you’re employer?

JUAN HERNANDEZ: Yes.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you. And I didn’t catch the number but I think you stated that you represent a certain number of employees in the State of Connecticut.

JUAN HERNANDEZ: Forty-five hundred.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Forty-five hundred. And if you could clear up for me, are those individuals currently subject to a collective bargaining agreement? Through you, Madam Chairman.

JUAN HERNANDEZ: Yes, they are.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): And so are wages part of that collective bargaining agreement? Through you, Madam Chairman.

JUAN HERNANDEZ: Yes.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): They are. And so I guess I’m wondering if collective bargaining is the kind of methodology by which these jobs have an opportunity to negotiate for wages and benefits, are you
advocating that wage portion of that contract be increased outside of the agreement? Through you, Madam Chairman.

JUAN HERNANDEZ: No, that is not what we’re saying. What we saying is I am extremely proud that our members make more than $15 dollars an hour. What we’re saying here is that there was, in this state, in November a minimum wage rate increase in the State of Connecticut, no and the majority of the people on this state chose to say, get to minimum wage and the issue here is that if we keep the down all the time the economy would not be working, there would not be minimum business employers surviving because there is no one going to buy in those shops. So when we increase the minimum wage, increase the whole economy because the labor market that is union in the State of Connecticut is so small that it cannot sustain the economy so we are saying that the only way that the State of Connecticut could rebound economically is we increase the minimum wage to $15 dollars.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you. And through you, Madam Chairman. So is it your position that for individuals that have the ability to negotiate through an organized labor agreement which would include wages and benefits, that they should have their wages increased if the wage threshold in the State of Connecticut increases even if its outside that negotiated increase?

JUAN HERNANDEZ: I believe that all labor union in the State of Connecticut can negotiate collective bargaining in good faith with the employers. The outcome is that if wages and benefits need to be increase, that is the outcome through negotiations.
But the issues here is that the majority of those workers that work minimum wage, they don’t have a union, you agree that they should be union so they can have the same rights that the collective bargaining agreement that we negotiate then we shake hands and we do something else, but that is not a reality.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): So Thank you, Madam Chairman. You know, I’ve been around some might think too long but I have been around long enough to have negotiated a number of agreements with organized labor and I thought they were an effective process and I think that the people worked for the Community of Litchfield at the time agreed that we were able to do some good things through organized labor agreements. That doesn’t mean that I think they work all the time in all cases. That also doesn’t mean that I think employees shouldn’t be able to avail themselves of those options. What I am trying to understand is if we were to make a decision to increase minimum wage to what degree would it affect people that are a part of an organized labor agreement, especially under which a number of other things may have been negotiated, and by increasing this, perhaps for all the good reasons that you and others have spoken about, isn’t that something outside of the negotiation process and shouldn’t it be part of the negotiation process? And so would I be correct that you take the position that if there is an agreement and it does find and employer an employee that that agreement should not be unilaterally usurped by an increase in minimum wage?

JUAN HERNANDEZ: If labor union has own contract and based on that contract they have language that has addressed or not addressed that issue. The issue
here right now in front of us is, if we believe that the mandate that the voters of this state gave this legislature to increase the minimum wage to $15 dollars is what you will do or not. And I believe that is the right thing to do because it will bring a lot of Black folk, Latino folk out of poverty because they will have a wage that is helpful to them.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you and I thank the Gentlady.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Representative. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): You just gave me a promotion? [Laughter] Thank you. Thank you Juan for being here today. Would you say historically that increases in minimum wages through collective bargaining have actually benefited beyond the union members that are directly affected have also helped bring up wages of other workers that aren’t represented?

JUAN HERNANDEZ: Yes.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): And would you also say, I mean I believe historically increases in minimum wage laws have also helped all workers including workers who are represented by unions?

JUAN HERNANDEZ: Yes.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): So it is a very symbiotic relationship as I’ve understood it and no one where one usurps the power of the other but in fact as a country we put move forward with both collective bargaining and through laws like minimum wages. Is that your understanding as well.
JUAN HERNANDEZ: Yes.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): That’s been sort of my experience. I want to say that I really appreciate the role that you and your union have taken in advancing the minimum wage issues even though your members are earning higher than the minimum wage laws that your are fighting for and I think that has always been the case of folks who are already benefiting from union wages. They’ve often taken care to fight for laws that would help other workers gain the kind of stability and standards that they’ve achieved through collective bargaining. I really, really, I mean it, I really appreciate it. I know that when you say that workers and people in our state voted for minimum wage in November I really understand what you mean because that was the issue that people were talking about, that was one of several but it was a real prominent issue that when people were voters were talking about who they were gonna vote for, they wanted to know where you stood on minimum wage and increasing the minimum wage. So I get what you’re saying and I think that you are reminding us that we have an obligation to now respond to those voters who looked to us to make changes in Connecticut. So I thank you so much for your testimony and also for all the work that you do.

JUAN HERNANDEZ: Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you Senator Kushner. Representative Vargas.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you very much for being with us today, Mr. Hernandez. I just wanted to and thank you to the Chair for allowing me to speak. The fact is that I have great admiration for your
Union 32BJ because unlike may unions that traditionally just deal with the business aspects of unions as outlined by Senator Miner which is, you know, negotiate wages and benefit for their members, 32BJ and many of the SEIU locals have taken on social unionism and invested into the welfare of the entire community. And I’ve seen that time after time in the City of Hartford how you care about the working poor which the United Way call the ALICE Community which are people that are access limited, income constrained yet they are employed but they can’t sometimes meet the most basic needs of their families. It is interesting because in the past we had unions like the United Auto Workers which Senator Kushner was strongly affiliated with that had taken on that role of civil rights. I remember Walter Reuther standing with Martin Luther King fighting for civil rights for African-Americans and that kind of unionism, that social unionism that seeks to improve the wellbeing of everyone in the community, not only your union members that, and I congratulate you that they are making better than the $15 dollars an hour shows a commitment to the entire community of Connecticut and I believe, you know, sometimes they talk about collective bargaining but there are limits to collective bargaining because I remember when Walter Reuther tried to address the issue that some of cars coming out of Detroit were too expensive for the American people and tried to address the issue of quality and cost for the consumer that it was an outrage among politicians saying that that was not a proper issue for the labor movement to address, that they had to stick their nose very carefully to the interests of their own membership and there has been many attempts to constrain what collective bargaining can
and cannot negotiate about. So to take that additional role of political activism, social activism that your union, your union was at the forefront of that referendum you were talking about which is the referendum of is it time for Connecticut to raise the minimum wage. And I congratulate you on your role in that election, helping us elect a new Governor, a new legislature with that new mandate. So I think what you’ve said here today should really touch the conscience of every politician in the State of Connecticut whether they were for the results of that election or against the results of that election, the people of Connecticut spoke and I think it’s time that we take action to reflect the will of the majority of the people of the State of Connecticut. Thank you, Mr. Hernandez. Thank you, Madam Chair.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Representative Vargas that was very well put and I do believe that there is no one else left to speak and I will just make the comment of piggybackin off of what’s been said. I applaud you 32BJ, is like what I like to call the village that to the basis we take care of everyone, we look out for everyone, we may be doin well but we reach back and we lift us, to thank you so very much for the work that you’ve done. I also recognize something that Senator Kushner said and I just want to state it again because I was out there knocking doors all over the state north, east, west, south corners of the state and it was in different districts with different experiences but the message was the same, they were in support and I’m sayin 100 percent but I will say at least 90 percent of the doors I knocked throughout this state were in support of paid family medical leave and minimum
wage and they felt they went in tandem, they went hand-in-hand and that we could not do one without the other. So thank you and your team and your union members that got out there and put boots on the ground and gave the people in this state an opportunity to have their voices heard at the ballot box where it counts. Representative Vargas for the second time.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Through you very much, Madam Chair. I just neglected to mention that in the audience today we have City Councilman Larry Deutsch who has also been very involved in the Fight for $15 movement and he’s been in the trenches with us when we’ve been out there with those low wage workers in the fast food industry and that whole movement are witness today, Mr. Hernandez is correct this is a national movement and SEIU not only locally here in Connecticut but throughout the whole country has been a leader in that Fight for $15 movement. It’s about time so let’s do something about it and thank you Larry and thank you, Madam Chair.

JUAN HERNADEZ: The last comment I wanna make is for our members around 63,000 members this is an issue of moral. We make better than minimum wage but we could not be left behind the rest of the workers that made less than us.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you and you have a great day. [Applause] Next up we have. I’m just gonna ask that you just hold on the applause please. Thank you and that’s just protocol. I appreciate it but we want to be within our protocol. Representative Brandon McGee did he ever enter the room? Not yet, okay. Representative Quentin Phipps
and Kyra Franklin. Good afternoon, Representative Phipps and Ms. Franklin the floor is yours.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): Good afternoon Chairs and Ranking Member and to the other members of the Committee. I am Representative Quentin Phipps of the 100th District which is the City of Middletown and I have Stephanie Decus with me who I am going to yield my time to.

But I will say just two fairly quick things. One, if Connecticut was truly invested and working on racial justice, health equities, social justice, the gap in gender wages and many of sort of the fundamental issues of our state. If there was one issue we needed to work on health equity. If we were truly interested in working on those issues this would be the number one issue to work on and fix. The Fight for $15 would address all of, several of these inequities all at one time. And in particular one of the reasons I wanted to have and yield my time for Stephanie was she is a member of 1199 which is same union that my mom served in for 30 plus years when I was growing up and knowing that we still have the inequities that my mom saw. The difference in wages based on gender and on race, having limited access to health care, however, but because she was in 1199 that we had a different opportunity. So I want to make sure that everyone in our community has those same sort of opportunities and once again support for this Bill is one way to do so. So with that I yield my time to Stephanie.

STEPHANIE DECEUS: Good afternoon Senator Kushner, Representative Porter and the Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is
Stephanie Deceus and I am a Vice-President of the Service Employees International Union District 1199 New England.

Our union represents 26,000 members in Connecticut both in the public and the private sector. Our members are Black, Brown and White caregivers, most are Black and Brown women and many from immigrant communities. They serve people in need of assistance daily and they do some of the toughest work you can find within the borders of our state. Today I am here in support of Senate Bill 2 and House Bill 5004 which both gradually increase the minimum wage to $15 dollars, a policy change that is long overdue and will impact the lives of many of our members, their families and the communities that they live in. Connecticut is stronger when we work together to protect families in every corner of our state and improving the quality of life for working people in different places of many different races with equity.

Gradually increasing the minimum wage to $15 dollars will lift pay for hundreds of thousands of Connecticut workers, affect fulltime workers could earn up to $3,000 more in the first phase in, enough to make a tremendous difference in the life of fast food worker, a janitor, healthcare workers and the many other hardworking people.

Connecticut can be a place where working people are able to take care of their own families without having to struggle. With my union I have spent my time fighting for workers’ rights and improving their lives. I can speak directly to the fact that Black and Brown workers are overrepresented in low wage jobs that do not provide good wages or
benefits. I also want to point out that Connecticut is now surrounded by states that have raised the minimum wage. It is about time for Connecticut to join the neighboring states in passing the policy that truly impacts the lives of working people and in particular low wage earners so our state’s status can reflect our values and unity with solidarity with all families. Today I urge you to pass these Bills for the sake of all workers in Connecticut. Thank you for your time.

REP. PORTER (94TH): And thank you for your testimony. Any comments or questions from the Committee? All right, well I would like to thank the both of you for taking the time to testify today. Next up we have Calitxo Cornejo. Good afternoon.

CALIXTO CORNEJO: Good afternoon. Bueno tardes member of the Committee. [Speaking Spanish]

CARMEN SARGENT: Good afternoon, members of the Committee. Thank you for hearing my testimony in support of raising the minimum wage to $15 dollars an hour by passing SB 2 and HB 5004.

CALIXTO CORNEJO: Mi nombre is Calixto Cronejo. [Speaking Spanish].

CARMEN SARGENT: My name is Calixto Cronejo. I work full-time as a janitor in a building in Stamford where I make $15.50 an hour.

CALIXTO CORNEJO: [Spanish]

CARMEN SARGENT: It’s a demanding job where I have to clean up a lot of bathrooms, but I was very happy to take the job a few years ago and mailroom at UBS
Bank where I made the minimum wage of $10.10 an hour.

CALIXTO CORNEJO: [Spanish]

CARMEN SARGENT: I cannot say strongly enough how much of a difference this difference in a basic wage has meant for me. I live with my wife and a young grandson. When we first came to this country he was only six years old. At that time, my wife had trouble finding work. All we could afford was a single room apartment where the three of us slept. I had to take the bus everywhere which made my activities outside of my work very difficult, especially the time I volunteered as a soccer coach.

CALIXTO CORNEJO: [Spanish]

CARMEN SARGENT: When I left that job, I started my union cleaning job at $13.60 an hour, and my contract with my union 32BJ guaranteed my wage increases. Now I am able to afford a simple but reliable car. We were able to move into a slightly better apartment so my grandson, now at age 13, can have his own room. It has made a tremendous difference in the dignity of my family life.

CALIXTO CORNEJO: [Spanish]

CARMEN SARGENT: I was fortunate to find my union job but over 300,000 men and women in Connecticut work for minimum wage. They have the same troubles I had. You could help them transform their lives like mine was by the passage of SB2 and HB 5004.

CALIXTO CORNEJO: [Spanish]

CARMEN SARGENT: For older workers, especially people with grandchildren like me, it is asking a lot to pretend that in time in our situation will
change and that the minimum wage is just a starting wage. We need to think of the minimum wage as a base, one that is livable on its own. That is what I have now and that is what all workers deserve in Connecticut. Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You’re welcome and thank you and just for the record I am going to request that you state your first and last name, and spell it.

CARMEN SARGENT: Thank you, my name is Carmen Sargent and I had the pleasure to translate for Calixto Cornejo.

REP. PORTER (94TH): And would you please spell Sargent?

CARMEN SARGENT: S-A-R-G-E-N-T.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Carmen. Any comments or questions from the Committee? Yes, Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you so much. I just need Carmen to introduce herself. I recognized your voice when my head was turned around, it is nice to see you again. But I do appreciate so much your testimony here today because I think the point you make that a lot of workers feel that even that it is very hard to earn above the minimum wage and don’t see that in their future and I think it gives us some perspective that, you know, earlier today there some comments by another Committee member about, you know, being a starting wage and it being an opportunity to get started and get people will then advance and I think it has been my experience and I am wondering if you also found that far too many people are working for many, many years at the minimum wage.
CARMEN SARGENT: [Speaking Spanish to Mr. Cornejo]

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Has that been your experience, could you also translate, Carmen, for me? Me Espanola es malo. [Laughter] Could you ask him if he finds that a lot of people that he knows who are workers are staying at the minimum wage, not advancing?

CARMEN SARGENT: [Speaking Spanish to Mr. Cornejo]

CALIXTO CORNEJO: Sí. [Spanish]

CARMEN SARGENT: Yeah I can clearly remember a Evert Selion [phonetic] a co-worker I had at UBS where he used to make $10.10 like me and I see him now doing exactly the same as he was at that point.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Muchas gracias.

CALIXTO CORNEJO: De nada.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you and I just want to thank you for your testimony. We have heard that $15 dollars is not enough and we know that, it is quite clear, we have researched it. Sorry, I should give you time to translate [Laughs], $19.08 would actually be more of a ballpark figure for a single person.

CARMEN SARGENT: [Translating as Representative is speaking]

REP. PORTER (94TH): So I just want to thank him for the testimony because he is actually validate, you know, what a lot of us have been expressing today that it may not be enough but it certainly makes a difference and his testimony, the difference it has made in his life and the life of his children and
grandchildren is something that definitely needs to be duly noted. So thank you.

CARMEN SARGENT: [Translating]

REP. PORTER (94TH): And thank you Carmen for taking the time to be here today to translate.

CARMEN SARGENT: Thank you for allowing us to speak.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You are very welcome. Next up we have Representative Josh Elliott, is he in the room. That doesn’t count. [Laughter] Minority leader, Wildaliz Bermudez is she in the room? All right, we battin a hundred here. Hail in from Hamden, District Councilman, Justin Farmer. Good afternoon, Councilman Farmer.

JUSTIN FARMER: Good afternoon. Thank you, Representative Porter and Senator Kushner as well as the other Distinguished Members of the Committee here at the Labor Committee. My name is Justin Farmer. I am a Councilman in Hamden but today I am speaking in my capacity as an Intern for Planned Parenthood. So I just to first say that I am speaking in favor of SB 2 as well as HB 5004. When we’re talking about minimum wage it is also important to, I’m also speaking on SB 764.

So when we’re talking minimum wage, it is important that we have the context of a fair workweek. There is a narrative that we have that minimum wage is for younger people, it’s for people who are in transition but it’s not true. We have many people in our community who have, like me, wear multiple hats, or multiple headphones if you will, that have to balance their lives so as a student we have people who are going to school while getting their education and have to work a fulltime job at the
same time as having a job of getting an education and then pay their bills. We have single mothers who have to take care of children.

Yesterday we heard testimony talking about, we’ve heard testimony talking about single mothers tried to be able to afford to, you know, have childcare and at the same time being able to pay their bills and to provide for their family.

So, just a couple of things. As we are talking about village mentality, cause that’s what we really need to be talking about, for us to be prosperous in the land steady habits we need to make a steady habit to take care of our community. New York State as well as Massachusetts and New York City have all pages paths $15 minimum wage. This has extended to food service workers to menial labor to all labor that, you know, this is something important. It’s not just to say that a person who is spending 40 hours at schedule to work $10.10 dollars a hour will have someone, when you’re talking about fair workweek as well, a person who is making $10.10 dollars an hour, one week they can make $303 dollars, the next week they might make $100 dollars. We can’t ask our community members to balance their lives to made adequate contributions to our community if we don’t give them the tools to, not only uplift themselves but uplift the State of Connecticut.

The last thing I want to say on a personal note is that, when we’re talking about labor, we’re talking about respecting peoples contributions. To pay someone under what they are worth and to pay someone less than they can either live or whether we’re talking about a livable wage or sustainable wage,
the point of working is being able to provide for yourself and take care of yourself whether that is, you can buy food and have food on your table or whether you can take care of your family and go on a vacation, enjoy the things that we know add to productivity and add to our value in our standard of living. That doesn’t make a difference if peoples work and their value is being disrespected, it doesn’t make any difference. So I urge out to support these three Bills and lastly touch on Governor Lamont’s Bill.

Governor Lamont’s Bill is well intentioned but to say that students or people who are trainees on a job should be paid less for, to give their labor to us, is frankly cheapening to say that someone is learning the ropes of the job that they deserve to be paid less than what it takes to does that job. That is something that we as a state, I feel that we can’t afford that and as we have students and have younger people who are leaving the State of Connecticut we really need to give them the opportunity and the tools to make sure that they can stay here, get the training here and want to be here in our state. So I thank you all for your time.

REP. PORTER (94TH): And I thank you for your testimony and I think what you ended on, that note, is an incentive for young people to remain in this state and to give it their best and I would like to see it more looked at like a 90-day trial period as opposed to a 90-day cut in the wage because the work is the same no matter what, those 90-days they’re gonna be doing the job. Any comments or questions from the Committee? Yes, Senator Kushner.
SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. I’m so glad you’re here testifying today cause I had a question for a young person an.

JUSTIN FARMER: Yes, I think I still count.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Yeah, I’m pretty sure you do. So there has been concern that if we raise the minimum wage to $15 dollars that young people won’t find jobs that they need in the summer to either support their families or to get out of the house but regardless of the reason, there is concern that young people wouldn’t have, be able to find employment. What I’m remembering and somebody handed me some data from Quinnipiac University poll last summer, August 23, 2018 there was a poll about the minimum wage and asking people if they supported the $10.10 per hour, the increase in the minimum wage from $10.10 to $15 dollars an hour and what I see here is that young people, those 18 to 34, 65 percent were in favor of that and so I, you know, I wanted to ask you as a young person if you could address that. Do you find your peers are in favor, I know you are, you’ve come here and testified that way, but it sounds like from this pool that a lot of young people in our state want to see this happen?

JUSTIN FARMER: Yeah, I just to speak anecdotally and I also love that you mentioned Quinnipiac which is in our backyard, you know, being a student I know multiple students who work multiple part-time jobs. The difference is that they have a schedule that has them on for part of the time and then doesn’t have them on part of the time. The difference of $4 dollars or $4 dollars and change an hour can make the difference of do I need to work another extra job or can I spend that time on my studies. So when
we’re seeing that it’s gonna be harder for people to find jobs, we already have a problem. To say that we have a problem with a demand of job is a fallacy. We know we have enough jobs, we know that you look at anyone of the big defense industries, they have tons of jobs where they can pay people the question is do they have the skills to fill those jobs and if I can’t make the time to educate myself to get those skills to get a better paying job, it doesn’t matter as your saying that there’s not enough jobs. Right now what we need to focus on is having a minimum wage where people can survive so they can uplift themselves. I think I answered your question in a round about way but, to say it in a simplistic way, if were concerned that we don’t have enough jobs, then the conversation we need to be having is about job development and creating and if we’re saying that paying people an adequate wage where they can look into finding employment provide for themselves and not be dependent on the state those are two separate conversations that we need to divorce rather than to say that we are going to lose jobs because we’re paying people what they are worth and what they need to survive.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you and just to mention Quinnipiac, you know, there was a legislative breakfast not long ago that we attended and I think the thing that resonated with me the most was the fact that students were actually testifying to the fact that they were homeless, and I mean we’re talking about students that are goin to school and working and that there was a food pantry that has been established an Quinnipiac because there is a food __32544__ for the students there. So I think
we need to take all these things into consideration when we talk about students in a way that I don’t think is actually realistic. That might have been decades ago that that applied but nowadays there should be no difference in wages if you have to go to work and you have to do the job, you should get paid the same as anyone else that’s comin through that door to do that job. So thank you again Justin for takin out the time to be here and to testify and thank you for all the work that you do on behalf of this state, not just your district but this state because you were out there traveling the state with me as well, so I do want to take this opportunity to thank you for all you do to help level the playin field and bring back that village mentality where we take care of one another.

JUSTIN FARMER: Yeah, thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You’re welcome.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Next up we have Bishop John Selden. Is Bishop Selden here? Okay we’ll move to another person on the list from the public and that is actually a constituent of mine, Cynthia Ross-Zweig who I recognized the name because she is from New Fairfield.

CYNTHIA ROSS-ZWEIG: Good afternoon, Senator Kushner, Representative Porter and Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. I am speaking in support of House Bill 7224 On Para Pay Equity. My name is Cynthia Ross-Zweig. I live in New Fairfield, Connecticut and I have been a paraeducator in New Fairfield School District for approximately 13 years.
Many fields are dominated by women, these include clerical fields, service work and education. Historically those jobs have been under valued and continue to be underpaid to a large extent because of the gender of the people who work in the field. Part of the wage gap results from differences in education, experience or time in the workforce. But a significant portion cannot be explained by any of those factors. If we look at who is the Para it is usually a woman working in her local community. Does the job pay less because it is held by a woman? The women who work as paraeducators in today’s school system perform many responsibilities. We support student with individual educational plans, known as IEPs or 504s in one-to-one settings and in a group setting as well. Paras are required to know the subject they are giving support in and coach on a level that the student learns that for comprehension. Paras must have training in behavioral management, provide occupational therapy and physical therapy support all while earning what is presently a salary below the federal poverty level.

In my town of New Fairfield paraeducator’s salaries start at $13 dollars per hour and often must work two or three jobs to make ends meet. Many paraeducators are single parents supporting their families with the help of public assistance due to low wages at work. Often people ask why not move on then. The question is then what happens to the students who need the support? Many paras will tell you that they continue purely out of their concern to help students.

The National Committee on Pay Equity states many women workers are the sole support of their
families. In addition it is estimated that 70 percent of women with children under 18 work outside the home up from 44 percent 20 years ago. Discriminatory pay has consequences as people age and cross generations. Everyone in society is harmed by wage discrimination, everyone needs pay equity. Pay equity can bring great savings to taxpayers at a minimal cost to business. Adjustments will cost no more than 3.8 percent of hourly wage expenses. In Washington State as an example, pay equity was achieved at a cost of 2.6 percent of the state’s personnel budget and it was implemented over an eight year period.

When wages for women and people of color are raised their purchasing power will increase strengthening the economy. Yes, pay equity helps workers become self-sufficient and reduces their reliance of government assistance programs. A recent study found that 40 percent of poor working women would leave welfare programs if they received a pay equity increase.

We ask that you as legislators take an active roll in improving the working conditions of these approximately 10,000 workers across our state. When you help a para, you help a family and a child. Please support House Bill 7224.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you so much for that testimony. Representative Vargas.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Let me thank you for bringing that testimony here. I was a teacher for 35 years in the Hartford Public School System and I can tell you as a teacher and as a teacher representative with the Hartford Federation of Teachers, I can tell you just how much teachers
needed the assistance of their Paras and how agonizing it was when a teacher lost a paraeducator and how they all fought hard to make sure they had retrained paraeducators because it made a huge difference in their ability to teach kids. And I remember too that during the first half of my career, which speaks to the limits of collective bargaining, we did a lot of things. We were able to make sure that female and male teachers get paid the same for the same educational experiences, same years of experience through collective bargaining, so we were equally poor. My first half, first half of my career, most teachers had a second job to support their families. It wasn’t until 1986 when this legislature passed the Salary Enhancement Act that finally Boards of Education started paying teachers a professional salary based on their education and years of experience.

Not that the unions, the NEA and AFT weren’t doing a good job of representing their membership, the fact is that boards of education are public entities and public funds were limited and it took an act of the legislature to be able to ensure that people were compensated appropriately in those classrooms in the State of Connecticut. So, you know, when you hear people say, well why don’t you negotiate it, well there is a lot of constraints on collective bargaining, a lot of things that cannot be negotiated. Civil rights were not negotiated at a collective bargaining table. You can ensure that your members and your local are maybe discriminated but you really can’t affect all of society except through political action. Same thing with many other issues, we were able to get female teachers the same money as male teachers with our union but
that still doesn’t mean a lot of women are working for 58 cents of what a man is working in most of society. So there’s a lot of issues that have to be addressed politically and I think this Bill goes a long way towards that. Thank you for your testimony. You have my support and thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Other comments or questions? Representative Porter.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. It seems that you have a tremendous responsibility regard to students, most of them around need the service, so I’m just curious how does your pay compare to that of custodians or secretaries in the school you work at?

CYNTHIA ROSS-ZWEIG: I actually have those figures for you. So starting salary for paraprofessionals in my district is $13.23 an hour. Starting salary for a custodian at Level 1 which would be somebody with no experience is $16.34 an hour. For a secretary it is $18.69 an hour. So there is a substantial difference.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Wow, I mean there was, but I didn’t expect it to be that substantial. And you say generally the gender of the custodians at work are men or women?

CYNTHIA ROSS-ZWEIG: Men.

REP. PORTER (94TH): They’re men. Okay. Well thank you for that information and thank you for your testimony but most of all, thank you for your commitment and your passion for the kids, the children in this state, that’s where the rubber meets the road. For me education is the foundation
and the work that you do, we can’t put a price on that and I wish we would start to look at how Europe sees their teachers cause they actually more than doctors and lawyers and they understand you don’t get to be a doctor or lawyer unless you’ve had a great education. So I appreciate you comin in today, makin the argument and givin us the testimony that you did. It hasn’t fallen on deaf ears and I really appreciate you for all you do.

CYNTHIA ROSS-ZWEIG: Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You’re welcome. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. I am happy that Representative Porter asked you about those other rates. I know that when I began working when I was 24 years old, a longtime ago, I thought it was, I thought it was a huge problem that we didn’t pay women workers the same as their male counterparts in the particular job classification but particularly if you looked at what other workers doing different kinds of jobs, you know, but with the same kind of background were making far more if they were in an occupation that was predominately male. I know the comparison is often made with custodians and I just want to be clear, I’m sure you would agree, that we’re not saying custodians make too much money.

CYNTHIA ROSS-ZWEIG: Oh, no absolutely not. Everyone makes their contribution to the school system. All we’re saying is that we need to bring everybody up to the same level that contributes to that.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I knew you would say that and I do want, you know, I want to acknowledge that
the custodians in the buildings in Stamford earned a higher living wage it benefited us when we were negotiating for childcare workers because it helped us to get our wages up so we understood that was linked. And I know you’ve done a lot of great work in New Fairfield on behalf of the paraeducators and the children in New Fairfield so I too want to thank you for all that work.

CYNTHIA ROSS-ZWEIG: You’re welcome. Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Other comments or questions? Okay, thank you. Next up, I believe is Representative Elliott, is he still in the room. Yes, he is.

REP. ELLIOTT (88TH): Chairwoman Porter, Chairwoman Kushner, thank you for having me. I will just speak briefly about the minimum wage, not as a Representative but as a business owner and someone who has thought a lot about this issue.

For myself I do not think about this in terms of the moral aspect, I think of this in terms of the economic aspect. One sort of analogy I like to use is, what we’re trying to do is change the value of a dollar essentially. If you think about what we were doing in the 70s where if minimum wage had kept up with inflation we would be around $21 dollars an hour, you could go to school. work part-time, pay off your loans and leave debt free and all those things worked so that you could then being immediately saving for retirement the second you were out of those doors. So let’s look at an example of somebody who makes a million dollars a year versus somebody that makes $25,000 dollars a year and this person who makes $25,000 dollars a year, if they are working 2,000 hours a year they are making
approximately $12.50 dollars. That ratio is about 40:1 but say we double that amount that they’re making and they are making $50,000 dollars a year and now it becomes 20:1 and as the lower end of the income spectrum makes more and more money, they are just getting a larger and larger portion of the pie. That unit of work is staying the same no matter what we’re doing in terms of that wage. So from my perspective, when the economic group comes up and says, well sure we’ll bump the minimum wage but we want to bring down that top tax bracket and we’re giving more money back to the ultrawealthy we’re actually keeping that ratio pretty much in place which thereby offsets what we’re trying to do by increasing the minimum wage.

I am speaking as a business owner who pays the minimum wage right now. I don’t pay $15 dollars to all my employees. Starting pay is about $10.50 for some of my employees and it is very difficult to be a business owner and be progressive in this environment because to a lot of people that means that is it hypocritical. For me, what I would like to see is a change in our system. To see the base wage change for everybody across the board. It is difficult for a small business owner, we will hit first by the minimum wage increase but it will filter up across the board and I would like to see the ultrawealthy in our state pay more for what we had for 40 years basically from the late 1940s to the late 1970s, we had something called the Great Compression. And basically what this did, was it spurred on the economy because people at the lower end of the income spectrum spent all of their money so it helps local economies and then it also helps by taking those at the top end and reinvest in
education infrastructure and make sure that our labor force is educated for the future. And it was a whole system that worked really, really well until we sort of forgot how good things were and the fish is the last to see water. Basically what happened, was we said this is so good what if we also eliminated those rates for the top earners and what if we also went after unions and made it harder for people that are surviving on minimum wage to stay afloat.

Every year we do not increase the minimum wage is a one to three percent hit on people’s paychecks. So every year that we wait, not only are they not getting a raise, they are actually getting a bite out of their paycheck taken out. And so, it would be $21 dollars and hour from this year to next year, I think that would demolish small business like mine in terms of what that bottom line is but should we be aiming to get beyond $15 dollars an hour, absolutely. I think trying to aim for where we were at the late 1970s in terms of what that rate should be, I think should be continually going up every year so I really hope that this Committee also looks at potentially having the minimum wage indexed to CPI as well so we don’t have to keep coming back to this year after year so that we make sure whatever we get keeps rate with inflation as well. And that concludes my remarks, thank you for having me.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Comments or questions? Representative Polletta.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): Good afternoon, Representative. How are you?

REP. ELLIOTT (88TH): Great.
REP. POLLETTA (68TH): If you don’t mind, let me ask you what line of work are you in?

REP. ELLIOTT (88TH): My mother started a natural food store about 20 years ago and I opened up my own about 5 years ago. We have one in Hamden and we have one in Shelton. We employ about 45 employees at each market.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): Awesome. And just, you know, you eluded to in your testimony a little bit of what I had spoken to earlier saying that the minimum wage increase would hit the business, the small business owners first, right. You said that. So just getting your perspective, I know you’re in favor of raising it, do you believe that if we raise this minimum wage at any point along the line are you going to have to raise your costs, excuse me, your prices?

REP. ELLIOTT (88TH): So there’s a couple of aspects of what people see as the immediate effects of raising minimum wage. First is I am going to absolutely gonna answer your question. The first this is that there is goin to be job loss. For about 80 years economics is still a fairly new field in terms of all of the social sciences that we have and it also a very soft science which means that it is very hard to test because we have no control universe to test against. But the majority of economists believe that we are going to lose jobs as a rule and what we’ve seen through analysis over the last 20 years is that is actually false that in terms of job loss, it usually remains about flat in terms of what it would normally have been had the minimum wage not been increased. In terms of increasing costs, what I would say is this. I am
reading a study which is basically for every dollar that you raise on a minimum wage worker at a fast food joint that would increase the burgers and the burgers alone by a dollar. So there are ways for the business to offset those costs that will be an increase to labor.

First of all, an increase from $10.10 to say $11.10 or $11.35 will be an increase only to those who are only making that wage right now, it wouldn’t be giving an increase to everybody across the board. That would be just over a 10 percent raise, again just for that very small percentage of people and while the labor costs are usually the heaviest burden to a business, it’s not the entire burden. You know, really the cost of goods are some of the most expensive. So how will I adapt this? A few ways I see. One is some of the costs will be passed on to the consumer which will then increase some consumer goods, some of it will be costs to my pocketbook and I’ll soak up some of that so our customers balk and then also there is the fact that because my employees will be making more they also spend money in the business so we will be doing increased business, not just from my employees but from employees across the board. So it ends up being a virtual cycle where, yes, I take the hit immediately and some consumers take the hit, but what happens over the long run is that because we’re changing the value of a dollar it ends up being that people can just buy more and again it goes right back in the economy and there is a multiplier effect.

I would say one last thing is there is a concern about automation as well, my feeling about automation is it’s coming anyway. There is a study
out there called the “Oxford Study” it came out about five years ago or so and basically what it says in about 20 years, 47 percent of jobs in the U.S. will be automatable. This is looking at things like trucking where you have, you know, automatic vehicles, and looking at jobs that don’t rely on a lot of where there is interpersonal work or whether its’ creative work, a lot of jobs we are going to see are going to go the automated route. That will happen regardless whether or not we raise the minimum wage. So I guess the question is do we just wait until the wages flatline and people have to rely purely on government to help them with their daily necessities or do we say, no it’s gonna happen so let’s make sure people have a good standard of living without having to rely on government to oft that whether it is housing, or food or transportation.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): Great and thank you for bringing that perspective. So number one, when we talk about automated, I mean I can say for certain that almost every restaurant owner in my district has already said that, you know, their customers enjoy dealing with the waiter or waitress, right. I mean when I go to a restaurant I want to hear the specials from someone, I want to interact with that person, I want that person to sit down with me, recommend a good, fine wine. I don’t want to use an I-pad.

REP. ELLIOTT (88TH): I agree.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): I don’t. And really what I’ve heard is that won’t necessarily be the case, it is the cost of doing business that’s going to your point is held somewhat stagnant, it doesn’t just
drastically increase so, my next question to you and this will be my final, I don’t want to, you know, keep going on, I know we have a lot of people, but, you know, talking about the $15 dollars an hour and your workers. So there is some people I’m assuming in your line of work that make under $15 dollars an hour that now would have to increase to the $15 dollars so you said it would only affect those. But the ones that are making $15 dollars and $16 dollars surely are not going to do the same job, they are going to want $20 dollars or $18 dollars because I wouldn’t take on a managerial position or an oversight position if I was making the same as the worker that was below me. I would say hey, I’ll do that job for the same price. Can you speak to that a little bit?

REP. ELLIOTT (88TH): Yeah, there’s a pooling effect and what we find in studies is that the pooling effect is actually pretty small, that bubble outside of what you’re bumping that bottom rate up to. So while, yes $10 dollars goes to $11 dollars and somebody at $15 dollars, well I might do $16 dollars, maybe I’ll do like $15.50, 15.25 by the time it gets to $18 dollars, $19 dollars maybe you say, well I’ll give you a raise but it will be next year. So the pooling effect actually happens in a very small bubble there. And I guess one last question I would leave for you all to think about is if we don’t increase this minimum wage in the alternative would you be okay with a two percent hit to people’s wages year over year because without raising minimum wage that’s what we’ve been doing for the last couple of decades.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): And that’s a very fair point and going back to what you’re paying, you know, your
start line worker, to your manager, to maybe your plant manager, etc., etc. we talk about putting more money back into the economy. So again I made this argument earlier, I understand you weren’t here and totally understandable there’s so many things going on. I would understand if the $15 dollars an hour Bill that we’re talking about again, we’re not getting to it overnight, so I don’t want to make unfair assumptions, but if this Bill were to pass and tolls were to pass, and other measures for instance, you know, an increase in someone who makes over “X” amount of dollars pays more money were to pass, is it, aren’t we in essence robbing Paul to pay Peter? So if we increase the minimum wage and we tell your worker that is working the front register, great you’re worth $15 dollars an hour we need you here, we want you to work here, we’re not gonna go automated, great. That is, I know that’s your goal because, you know, you’ve spoken about that, but then that worker makes an extra $3 dollars an hour but it is exhausted in other places in the state. For instance maybe they are traveling to get to their job and they are paying two dollars and then two dollars to go home and they do that three or four times a week and you add that up, on the increase of the salary and what does it come out to at the end of the year, not a lot of money. So I guess my question is, you know, are we robbing Paul to pay Peter? Do we raise this Bill and vote this Bill in and then maybe vote another Bill in that increases the cost of an average person that is working for you and then they’re left with just the same amount of money in their pocket? So again, I appreciate you bringing that small business perspective up here. It’s an interesting debate today but you definitely brought
some light to the fact that there is no doubt about it that it’s gonna cost the small business owner more money to operate under this Bill and also it’s going to benefit in a way the workers because they will be getting a small bump in pay. But again my fear is that it might be wiped away by the other costs of increased interstate but thank you so much.

REP. ELLIOTT (88TH): Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Any other comments or questions? Representative Porter.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Just gonna piggyback on that. It’s interestin Representative Polletta talks about robbing Peter to pay Paul because I stated earlier, you know, we talk about cuttin spendin and when I look at what we’re spending over half of our spending goes to help people support themselves. Over a billion dollars that this state pays EITC, food stamps, cash assistance, Care 4 Kids you name it. We wouldn’t have to rob Peter to pay Paul if we would just pay Paul because increasing this minimum wage it’s been projected that we will put $1.3 billion and that’s an estimate a little over a billion dollars in paychecks of the lowest wage workers in this state. So it makes sense to me, why are we spendin when we can actually give people the opportunity to make the money that they deserves and it gives them the dignity that they deserve while doin that work because it’s been discussed, a lot of these job are retail workers, restaurant owners, waitresses, bartenders I mean have done all that work and frankly it’s not the work that a lot of people want to do and I think that’s another reason, another important reason why we need to make sure that these workers are gettin paid what they deserve
and that’s a livable wage. Right now we’re talkin about a very basic, basic minimum wage. Right? It’s not even gettin ‘em where they need to be but it’s better than what they have $10.10, we know we can’t make it, that’s why people are workin two and three jobs, $15 dollars an hour if you’re single you probably still have to work another job but we’re gettin there and I say we do it one step at a time and the fact that we’re spreadin this out, the House and the Senate Bill over three years, the Governor’ Bill over four, I think that were being kind and as compassionate as we can be and at the end of the day businesses will benefit, yes initially there gonna be some small businesses that take a hit. But like I said before, the workin people, especially the low wage workin people in this state have been takin a hit for decades and I think its time we answer the call that was put on us at the ballot box in November. So thank you so much for bringin a small business perspective to this and tellin us, why you yourself aren’t paying your workers $15 dollars an hour and hopefully and prayerfully we will get there this year. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Any other comments or questions? If not, thank you Representative Elliott. Next on our list is Martha Kloete [Phonetic] Where is Martha, is she here? Is that Martha over here? I’ll give her a chance. Okay I was waiting to see cause I massacred her name so I wanted to give her a fair shot. Next we have Jamie Mills.

JAMIE MILLS: My name is Jamie Mills and I am the Director of Fiscal Policy at Connecticut Voices for Children. We work hard to ensure that every child in our state has the opportunity to develop to their
full potential. We see the increase in the minimum wage as a key part of our work. I have submitted written testimony that has a lot of research attached and our position but I’ve been sitting here today listening to the testimony and so I really wanted to focus on a couple of things that have been raised today.

In terms of the Benefit Cliff issue, I think what is important for us all to recognize is that it’s real. It matters. It matters to a small group of people but it matters. But overall the increase in the minimum wage will reduce poverty in our state, it increases the net income of workers who are low wage workers but we do need to pay attention to those workers who make ends meet by virtue of a combination of earned income and public support and there are situations in which earning additional money could make you ineligible for a particular program. There is research that has been done that the University of Massachusetts at the Institute of Social Policy that, in Massachusetts under their system, and again I want to emphasize that every state is different and every program has different eligibility income limits as well as asset limits, work requirements so we need to look at our Connecticut specific rules. But in Massachusetts what they found is that if they had free and universal childcare there would be no benefit cliffs for anyone. That is in part because of Massachusetts expansion of healthcare so, Connecticut we need to do a comprehensive analysis of where are gaps exist for people who are working fulltime and who are relying to make ends meet on a combination of their earnings and public support.
In terms of subsidized housing, there really is not a cliff. The childcare and healthcare are two areas where we feel we need to be really careful.

The results of the increase in the minimum wage there will be some people who no longer need free public benefits so in fact there would be some savings to the State of Connecticut by virtue of increasing the minimum wage and what Voices for Children would like to suggest that we take a close look at where those gaps may be and that we devise smart public policies to address them so that no one is worse off or has a net loss of income because they work more hours or because they are getting an increase in their hourly rate.

The other point I would like to make is that the research is very clear that an increase in the minimum wage, may I just finish this one point? In a much smaller, a study of the federal minimum wage going from $7.25 to $12 dollars an hour had an enormous reduction in the overall poverty rate in our country and so when we’re looking at an increase from $10.10 to $15 dollars an hour the impact on our overall poverty rate is estimated to be somewhere between two and three percent of our population. So it’s an enormous impact in reducing the poverty rate and also as others have already noted, it’s sort of beginning to address the growing income inequality in our state between the highest earners and our lowest earners. So thank you very much and I’d be happy to take any questions.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman. So, you know, one of the things that for probably the last couple of years that I’ve been putting some
thought into is, is it conceivable that an increase in minimum wage would provide enough saving on the general funds side of the state’s budget to allow the state to offer incentives for perhaps the small businesses that, but for those incentives would be in a position where the cost of their products would have to go up in order to pay for the increase in wages. So for instance in a small grocery store, I think there was an exchange between Representative Polletta and Representative Elliot and so if we wanted to be, we wanted to be thoughtful about how that might work I think the last thing we want to do is increase the cost of milk in an effort to somehow increase the cost of wages. So am I hearing you correctly if I hear you say the cliff needs to be considered but maybe there is some room for savings on the general fund side with regard to either heating assistance, food assistance, you know, any number of things that might assist us in trying to buffer, you know, perhaps the business expense of an increase in minimum wage?

JAMIE MILLS: Massachusetts and New York have both paired their increase in the minimum wage to addressing what their benefit cliff study showed them by increasing eligibility for childcare assistance which again is perhaps the largest benefit cliff people face. I’ve not heard anyone suggest that we ought to do business sort of credits to compensate for the increase in the minimum wage but I just haven’t thought about that. What I am aware of is that other states who have increased their minimum wage have looked at taking the savings from decreased costs from some of our public programs and investing them into solving the benefit cliff problem.
SENATOR MINER (30TH): So, through you, Madam Chairman. So you think it is conceivable that there might be savings due to higher wages within the general fund that could allow us at least to manage the costs associated with the cliff as you describe it in other areas and would be supportive of that? Perhaps let go of some in an effort to maintain a balance in the other?

JAMIE MILLS: What I’m suggesting is using the savings from certain programs that would have fewer beneficiaries and investing that money to expand to fill the gaps that may exist for people who receive any increase in the minimum wage.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): So that’s what I’m trying to get at. So you see an opportunity then, you see at least a landscape that has fewer people dependent on all of those other assistance items and you’re not advocating that all of those other assistance areas be elevated in the way that you’re suggesting that the cost of child care might or health insurance might?

JAMIE MILLS: Correct.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I’ve very glad to hear you talk about that because, you know, it did seem to logical to me that if we have a problem with the benefit cliff effecting people because we’re raising their wages it doesn’t make any sense to me to say, oh, we’ve got to keep you at low, low wages so that you can get other benefits from the State. Something about that seems very backwards to me in that if we can narrow in on what maybe needs to be improved in terms of what we provide as, I don’t
want to say, safety net because that seems like it’s not very accurate, but what we provide to help people make do and when, you know, help families to be sure that they have safety net because that seems like it’s not very accurate, but what we provide to help people make do and when, you know, help families to be sure that they healthcare and they have childcare. I just feel like that is where we have to focus on are savings or our studies and make sure that we’re not hurting people by helping them. But I never understood how we could say, okay well you need to stay low wage, you need to stay, you know, subhuman wages just so you can keep your healthcare or you can keep your childcare that doesn’t strike any kind of sensible note with me. I also feel like the whole question about poor people not being able to buy mile or afford products because by raising the minimum wage we would then be costing them more in other, you know, ways in their life and that doesn’t really resonate with me either because it seems like products have gone up a lot more than wages have gone up over the years and the people falling behind are not keeping up. So, you know, that logic doesn’t make sense to me either. I have, this has been a very interesting day because what I’ve heard folks that are opposing minimum wage say, or increasing the minimum wage are saying that it is not a high enough wage to begin with so we should just leave it where it is and it is quite confusing. If I sound a little confused up here, I am. But I do appreciate that the work that Connecticut Voices has done I think has been very targeted, very specific in really providing good statistical information for us to look at and figure out how we move the whole State forward. So, I appreciate your work. Representative Porter.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Hi, Jamie. Thank you for being here today and thank you for your patience, you’ve
been with us all day. Question, the majority of public benefits programs don’t they generally incorporate a gradual phaseout and I’m referin to the benefits, the cliff that we’re talkin about?

JAMIE MILLS: You know, I don’t know all of the rules to each of our programs. I believe some of them do. I think some of them may not. I think people have some concerns about Medicaid for example or Care 4 Kids that may in fact have cutoffs that result in you losing a benefit as a result of earing a little bit more money.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Okay and that is definitely somethin that is being looked into as we discuss the benefit, what’ were callin the benefits cliff because I would rather think of minimum wage as a pathway not a cliff but I do understand that does exist but I also understand that as law makers and legislators we have the power to actually move those things as need be so there’s different way we can look at correcting this so that people are not gettin paid in the front pocket and getting the money taken out of their back pocket. And, you know, we keep talking about givin businesses incentives, I would like to see, I think the incentive would really work better if it were given to the employee and I think, well actually I know because there is research that supports the fact that when you raise wages you actually raise morale, you reduce retention, you increase person’s ability to have healthcare and all these things that we’re talkin about, you create a healthy worker which is a productive worker and it makes a happy community and one thing that we really haven’t discussed that may have been mentioned once but we, especially me, I’m concerned about the recidivisms rate in this state.
and studies report the fact that when you give return, a citizen a livable, sustainable wage they actually don’t recidivate. So I just want to put that in the record and remind everyone that’s listenin and my colleagues as well to take these things into consideration because it’s just not about raisin the minimum wage or puttin a little extra money in someone’s pocket. We’re talkin about the livelihood of not just the individual but the community and the state at large, so. Thank you again. Thank you, Madam Chair.

JAMIE MILLS: I just wanted to follow up with that statement David Cooper from EPI earlier this morning discussed the breadth of studies that have been done by economists and others about the impact of the minimum wage on jobs, on the number of hours available, on hiring on prices and I think that all of them show a negligible if immeasurable change in price or hours of work available or jobs available for low wage workers so I just wanted to say again that the cost of a gallon of milk example, the price may go up that the research shows that those are very, very small changes.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): And you know, I also appreciate you saying that because sometimes we lose sight of that and, you know, raising the minimum wage isn’t something new to us. We’ve done this in the country, in this country for, you know, over the decades a few times so we know the impact so I think some of the people are fearful of, I’m not saying its not genuine concern, I understand that it is genuine but I think we have history to look at and say that it is not going to, we’re not going to be hurting people by raising the minimum wage, not the people who receive it or the businesses or the
communities that ultimately as a nation we have benefited when we raised the minimum wage.

JAMIE MILLS: So I wanted to follow up on one of other thing if I might and that is, Connecticut’s definition of an employee already exempts employees who are employed in camps or resorts which are open no more than six months of the year, domestic services and so there is a number of examples that have been discussed and been brought up of where there maybe hardships by having a $15 dollar minimum wage but I would just encourage you all to look at the definition of employee because many of those positions are excluded under our Fair Labor Statue in Connecticut.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you, that is helpful as well. I’m sure Representative Polletta will be looking into that.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): You know, excuse me. Through you. That is an interesting point. I really didn’t know that. So are you in some way, shape or form saying that you are not a fulltime, maybe just a seasonal employee you would be exempt from this law?

JAMIE MILLS: That’s correct. It’s Connecticut General Statute 31-58(f). It defines what an employee is under the statute and then the next section is the one that the Bill I’m testifying in support of defines wages. So there are a number of exemptions there that have been talked about today as potentially causing hardship.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Representative Porter.

REP. PORTER (94TH): I was just gonna say thank you because that was a conversation that we had earlier
and I was supposed to ask you that question and got lost in floor, so thank you for remembering that I wanted to talk about that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you, Jamie.

JAMIE MILLS: Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Next up we have Mayor Luke Bronin. Welcome, Mayor. I just heard that you came a long way.

MAYOR BRONIN: Yes, a very long way. Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, Representative Polletta and I know Senator Miner stepped out but I am very grateful for the chance to testify before you today in support of S.B. 2, AN ACT INCREASING THE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE, and its corresponding legislation, H.B. 5004, AN ACT INCREASING THE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE.

You know, five years ago, when Connecticut became the first state in the country to take up President Obama’s call that we raise the minimum wage to $10.10 I think we all had cause to be very proud. But since then fourteen other states have raised their minimum wages higher and the number of states that are on the way to enacting a $15 minimum wage.

And I believe we should move in that direction. Raising the minimum wage will benefit hundreds of thousands of residents and workers throughout our state, will help them and their families and I will, I think strengthen our economy by boosting consumer spending. The legislation before you would gradually raise the minimum wage in our state to $15 dollars an hour by 2022 and begin indexing the minimum wage to the CPI in 2023, and consistent with what many
other states have done. It would also eliminate the training wage.

Companies in Hartford, including our major institutions like Aetna and Hartford HealthCare, have announced they are raising their own minimum wages to at least $15 an hour and When Hartford HealthCare made their announcement this January, they said they expected the increase to help them retain and attract workers in addition to the significant benefit to employees and their families.

I also think it is important to say that as the Mayor of city in which 85 percent of our resident are people of color, we are a community in which a very, very large number of people are earning the minimum wage or earning below $15 dollars an hour and I think that as anyone who studies the statistic on the minimum wage and the wages that are paid cannot help but be struck by the stark racial disparity in wages and the fact that the overwhelming share of those who are earing minimum wage are black or brown, African-American, Latino people of color. And I think that this is not just a question of helping families be able to support themselves and strengthen their community and have additional buying power to support their local economy, it is also a question of economic fairness and racial equity.

So I strongly urge this Committee and strongly encourage the General Assembly as a whole to support these Bills. Thank you very much for the chance to testify today.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you, I think hearing from one of our State’s largest and most prominent city’s is really important because I know it will
have an impact on the City of Hartford if we take this action and then it’s great to have you here testifying in favor of it. It’s reassuring and encouraging. Any comments from Committee members?

REP. PORTER (94TH): Just a quick comment to thank you and to, to thank you for your testimony but specifically for bringin light to the disproportionate impact in communities of color, workers of color and how it’s all intermingled and intersectional. It’s not just disproportionately impacted around wage, it’s housing, it’s credit, it’s education, it’s mass incarceration and if we correct this on an economic level we level the playn field and we bring the numbers down across the board and I think that is very important because Mayor, we’re savin money, the money that we’re spendin on incarcerated, probation, criminal justice and we can reinvest that money and makin people more prosperous and actually givin folks an opportunity, a real opportunity to achieve the American dream, so thank you so much for takin the time to be here today, Mayor Bronin.

MAYOR BRONIN: Thank you, Representative. I appreciate that and I agree with you 100 percent. You know, the ability for families to earn a living wage, a sustaining wage is vital to the community for all of the reason that you said and I think is important to say, you know, I’m proud that we are a city, we are working hard to promote economic growth in every way. You know, I’m proud that we are creating an innovation ecosystem. I’m proud that we’ve got companies on the leading edge of technology coming into Hartford but if we’re gonna be successful as a City and as a State that growth has to be inclusive and that means we have to make
sure that at the bottom of the pay scale that the wages that are paid are sufficient to sustain a family and to support and strengthen a community and for all the reasons you just said, I think it is vitally important that we pass this legislation.

REP. PORTER (94TH): I agree and one last plug and I will say this because it has been made mention of the companies in the state that have actually gone to $15 dollars which has peaked my interest and curiosity so my homework, part of it from this public hearing will be to look at what the lowest wage is and the companies that actually just went to $15 dollars because I’m inclined to believe that the majority of those employees are probably makin more than that anyway, not all of ’em but just out of curiosity, because I think this is just not the right thing to do. It’s feasible. I mean it’s not an impossible feat and at the end of the day the business will benefit because for businesses they thrive on what? What we put into the economy, the spendin power, so when you increase the spendin power you increase the profit and I think that the wealth needs to be shared especially in a state where we’re one of the highest per capita. So thank you again, Mayor Bronin. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you and also thank you for reminding us how elated we all felt when we raised the minimum wage to $10.10. I remember that very well. I was thinking about this morning. It seemed like such a great move on our part and I was so proud of our State for being, you know, the first I believe in the nation to respond to that call and I don’t feel as good today looking back and seeing that we’ve now once again fallen behind and we need
to take care of that, so thank you for coming here today.

MAYOR BRONIN: Thank you, Senator. Can I just add one more point that reminds me of. You know, we if you look at the history of the minimum wage, you look at the steps at which it has been increased, the minimum wage has not kept pace either productivity growth or with CPI and so in real terms minimum wage is lower now that it was in the past and I think it is important to remember that because in some ways we’re just fighting to go back to where we were and I think we need to keep that in mind.

The other thing is that when you look at what a truly livable wage is in our state it is far higher that even the $15 dollars that we’re proposing the state move to in the years ahead and I think that is also important to keep in mind because we are not proposing an exorbitant wage rate. We are proposing a rate that even at that $15 dollars is still far below the truly livable wage job that a family needs. So thank you very much for the opportunity to testify.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You’re welcome. Thank you again. Next up we have Kay Wright. Good afternoon, Ms. Wright, and welcome.

KAY WRIGHT: Good afternoon Senator Kushner, Representative Porter and Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Kay Wright and I’m a homecare worker from New Haven. I’m here to ask you to support the $15 dollar minimum wage bill.

I’m one of 9,500 homecare providers caring for those who can’t live independently in Connecticut. Almost
90% of us are women, and I believe the majority of us are black and brown folks. Everyone’s story is different, but in my case, I grew up seeing my mom take care of an elderly neighbor who had no one to help her. I know my mom was never paid for it, but I was raised to see that that was simply the right thing to do. I got into homecare myself after I retired from nearly thirty years of service at the telephone company. In my case, I retired with a Union pension, but not everyone is so lucky. Today, I care for an elderly gentleman who is partially paralyzed from a stroke. I do it because I love it and after retirement I wanted to stay busy and to give back in a way that I knew was valuable.

My consumer looks forward to me being there and I also look forward to going there to care for him. In a typical day, the tasks I do for him sound simple but they’re actually fundamental to him living independently. I help him to take his blood sugar, get cleaned up, apply lotion to his skin, and get him dressed. I go to the grocery store, go grocery shopping for him and make him dinner, and pay his bills. He values his independence and I truly think he wouldn’t survive if he didn’t have it. I remember once I made his bed for him and then watched him remake to his own liking. Caring for someone like him feels like a blessing both for him and for me. Quite simply, caring for someone else gives me pleasure.

Through my union, District 1199, we fought for a $15 minimum wage for homecare workers which went into effect last year. Even with the small number of hours I work, even with the small number of hours I work, that extra money makes it a little bit easier for me to pay my bills. Fifteen dollar per hour is
good and I’m thankful for it, but when I left the telephone company in 1996 I was making over $15 dollars an hour already.

What that tells me is that wages have not kept pace with the cost of living. Raising the state’s minimum wage to $15 dollars an hour is the first step in the right direction toward a livable wage for Connecticut’s residents.

In Connecticut passing a $15 dollar minimum wage and paid Family and Medical leave won’t even give us anything extra, it simply moves us two small steps closer to a future where working families like mine, and many of whom are black and brown, can survive. Even now, there are no room for emergencies. When something comes up like a large car repair or having to take time off without any paid leave we’re in a bind. It feels like we’re already chasing a train on foot, struggling to catch up, but the train is always faster than us. Helping working families come a step or two closer to survival is the right and humane thing to do. Please support the $15 dollar minimum wage. Thank you your time.

REP. PORTER (94TH): And thank you for your testimony. What you just described is a labor of love and I appreciate your for that because I did the same thing for my grandad and it does take a servant’s heart to do the work that you do so I applaud you for that and I thank you for taking the time to be here today to share your testimony with us.

KAY WRIGHT: Thank you very much.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You’re welcome. Any comments or questions from the Committee? Seeing none, you
are free to go. Thank you. Up next we have Senator Mary Abrams. Good afternoon, Senator.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Good afternoon. I’m Senator Mary Daughtery Abrams from the 13th District and I am here to support the increase in the minimum wage and I would like to thank Representative Porter, Chairwoman and Senator Kushner for having this hearing today and I am going to give the rest of my time to my wonderful friend and constituent Lynette Dockery.

REP. PORTER (94TH): I’m sorry, really quick, Lynette can you spell your first and last name for the record please?


REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you ma’am. You may proceed.

LYNNETTE DOCKERTY: Good afternoon, Senator Kushner, Representative Porter and the Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Lynnette Dockery. I am proud to be a homecare giver from Meriden.

I’ve been doing homecare for over 20 years plus. I started doing homecare in 1980. My grandmother became ill, she had Alzheimer. Back in 1980 you weren’t able to take care of a family member but now you are able to do that and I think that is wonderful. I was a manager at a retail store. I took off two years to take care of my grandmother. At that time they just started sending in home healthcare givers but it could only be for a couple of hours a day. My grandmother needed round the clock care. So while we were so happy with the care
that we did receive for the two or three hours, maybe two or three times a week, me and my mom, we decided to give back. We both became home healthcare givers.

I work two jobs. I work for a consumer that has the direct consumer waiver and so at this point we are at $15.25 an hour. I am very please with that. I also work for a client that I work through an agency, still a PCA only making $11 dollars an hour. I started with her, which will be this August three years. Actually today she is going to be evaluated. She has Alzheimer and we have watched her decline. To watch her decline has been very hard. When I first started with her she was feeding herself, she loved to garden, she would crochet, she was talking. Now at this point she does none of that. We puree her food. We are at a point now where she is not eating, actually hospice is coming into the home today so we don’t know where we stand with that.

The $11 dollars an hour doesn’t really matter at this point when it comes to this particular client and I love all my clients. But I’ve been with the family and they have been so wonderful to me and she has been pleasant to me. When I come in on my every other weekend, it allows the daughter, who is a wonderful caregiver for her mom, to be able to take some time for herself and that she trusts me. You know, so at this time I just want to be with the family and to the final days but again if I was making $15 dollars an hour from both of my jobs, it would give me an opportunity to better myself. I am a single parent. I have a son that just recently started college. I want a better life for my son so I’ve always worked two and three jobs, a lot of days he spent my hisself and he’s forgiven me for that,
but I was just wanting and hoping that we can all come to terms and to vote on this Bill to raise the minimum wages to $15 dollars across the board for everyone. Also joining my union 1199 I am very proud to be a part of, I have come to learn that I can do more in my life. I can be a better person that my words mean something and I’ve also learned that other people out here that are struggling every day, living check to check, trying to pay your bills, deciding if you’re going to buy food or can I pay this bill this week. And I just want to give the best, 110 percent of myself and I hope that one day when my care comes and someone has to take care of me, that I will get the dignity and respect that I give my clients today.

So again I ask that you know, we can pass this Bill for the $15 dollars minimum wage across the board for everyone. Everyone that works hard deserves a better living. I’ve never had a vacation, don’t know what that means, I would love to able to do that with my son. My sister just bought a home three years ago, I just lost my mom three years ago, so this has been a journey for me. I’m here today, a little shocked by it but I’m proud of it and my sister begged me to come to Virginia, she offered even to pay my way, but I had to let her know, if I miss a day’s work, I don’t get paid. So I just really wanted her to understand that every dollar counts but I also would love to see my sister’s home. And so again, I say, you know, we can pass this and help all the working people. We all get up every day. I travel from Meriden to West Haven, I travel from Meriden to New Haven, I travel from Meriden to Cheshire every day for a job. My union expresses to me, I can work one job, I’m looking
forward to that because at this time, I’m still working two. So I’m hoping that this Bill will pass and thank you for your time.

REP. PORTER (94TH): And thank you for your time and that you for that awesome testimony and my condolences to you on the loss of your mom. So much of your story resonates with me, been there, done that. And I do believe that is why the people closest to the pain should be closest to the power because just the experience, the perspective, you understand, no one has to explain it to you because you’ve walked more than a mile in those shoes and the sacrifices that you’re makin to do what you do, goes a long way and there is no doubt in my mind that you’re gonna make it to Virginia and much further than that. So you keep doin what you’re doin. Yes, Representative. Senator Abrams.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Thank you. I just wanted to add one thing, you can see why I’m so proud to be sitting here. And you just made a comment a moment ago Representative Porter referring to a servant’s heart which is something I’d never heard before and it is a lovely phrase but I just want to remind people that although they do the work with a servant’s heart these are workers and they deserve to be paid in a way that respects their work, so thank you very much.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Absolutely, one should agree a servant’s heart is service and service should be paid. Thank you. You have a great afternoon. Next up we have wow, David Weidlich, Communication Workers of America. [Audience applause] Thank you for making that announcement for me. Mr. Weidlich you have the floor, welcome.
DAVID WEIDLICH: Thank you. Good afternoon Representative Porter and other Committee members. I am here today to testify in support of Senate Bill 990 and Senate Bill 2, House Bill 5004 and House Bill 7191 provided the training and young worker issue is resolved.

So back to 990. We have over 2,000 workers in Connecticut and 500 of those workers are Call Center workers. Call centers are an economic lifeline for many communities across our country. There is about 32,000 of those jobs in our State. The thousands of call workers across the country have lost their jobs due to outsourcing. This Bill seeks to address that. The core of the Bill is simple. No taxpayer money for companies that shift jobs out of the State. Right now in real time, I have 89 members who are being displaced, their work is being moved to Georgia and Tennessee by AT&T. These jobs are $90,000 dollar a year jobs. They are going to have a hard time replacing those wages here in Connecticut and those jobs. Not to mention over 20 of those members are Veterans, so AT&T is doing a big program to hire Veterans but they are also displacing Veterans. This tax cut in 2017 has created a trend in outsourcing work. There is an unfair advantage for companies to profit who do business overseas versus in our country. A 21 percent tax on your earnings if you go overseas, 35 percent if you do business in our country. I’m not so sure everybody realizes that. AT&T raked in $20 billion dollars with this tax cut. They have cut 12,000 job across the country. Our neighbor New York just lost 150 jobs in Syracuse and they are going through the same thing. Their only option is to move to Florida. Call Center jobs are good payin,
solid middleclass jobs. One Call Center closing can devastate an entire community.

I would like to move over the minimum wage for a second and just say this about the minimum wage issues. Organized labor is under attack in our country. Union were always the check and balance on profits and wages. We spend out time now fighting off attacks on our organization, our right to organize and collectively bargain and now we’re here trying to pass legislation to raise wages for our members and other workers in our state.

So, I’ll leave and at this point I’ll take any questions you might have, sorry.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Any comments or questions from the Committee? Well I want to take the time to just thank you for being here and for makin the points that you made. Just curious around the outsourcing that’s goin on and the closin of the Call Centers, would you agree that those layoff as you said they were making what, $90,000 a year.

DAVID WEIDLICH: Yes.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Pretty good payin jobs. They’ve gone on unemployment, is that correct.

DAVID WEIDLICH: That is probably the path that’ll happen cause their only option is go down to work in Tennessee or Georgia or take the severance or some aren’t even eligible, aren’t retirement eligible just have to go find another job.

REP. PORTER (94TH): So how would you say this is not only impactin the people that have lost their jobs at the Call Center but the community and the state as a whole?
DAVID WEIDLICH: Well I think if people can’t find jobs and they’re on unemployment that is not good for our state.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Okay and just, you know, you mentioned the closin of the Call Centers is kind of reminiscent to me of what happened in communities when we started moving manufacturing overseas. It really does create a pocket of poverty in very specific districts and zip codes so I hear what you’re sayin, I’m workin hard to make it happen because I do understand the importance of keepin jobs in this country so that the people who live here can work and achieve what we call the American Dream. So thank you again, Mr. Weidlich for takin the time to be here today. Oh, I’m sorry Senator Miner. Come back, don’t run away.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman, I just wanted to make sure that I understood. So is it your understanding that this Bill would be proceptiv meaning that if any business received any assistance from the effective date forward that there would be limitations on an outsourcing positions?

DAVID WEIDLICH: I’m sayin, yeah, exactly that. If a company is takin benefits from the taxpayers of Connecticut and they move work out of our State they should no longer be eligible for those benefits.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Right. Thank you, Madam Chair. So my question was with regard to proceptivity, is it your understanding that this would be prospective so for instance if I was corporation XYZ and I applied for a grant loan and received the grant loan and I made representations to employ a certain number of people prospectively
from that point time in 2019 which is when the effective date of this Bill is, this would pertain, not retroactively to those that have already gotten the benefit?

DAVID WEIDLICH: I’m not so sure I understand your question and I can’t answer the question you’re asking me. It may be in the Bill in some context, I didn’t write the whole Bill, I’m here to support the Bill.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Okay. I was trying to get a clarification in terms of whether it prospective or retrospective. Do you think this Bill will have an impact, through you, Madam Chairman, on what’s currently going on with AT&T.

DAVID WEIDLICH: It would, if it was in place before, it would and going forward it would as well if they close the center. So today it does not, tomorrow it would.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Okay, thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you. I know you just entered your testimony but Mr. Weidlich just testified on Call Center and what were the other Bills you were testifying on.

DAVID WEIDLICH: Minimum wage as well, so that and the minimum wage Bill so if you would like to ask some questions. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): First of all I apologize I had to go vote in another Committee that I serve on so I apologize that I missed your testimony but I was interested in asking you a couple of things you may have already covered it, but I am aware that it’s projected that AT&T would be reaping a large
benefit from the tax bill that was passed last year by Congress that they would be getting a huge windfall from that and that at some point they had said that they would be offering wage increases, securing jobs because if they got a benefit from the tax bill, I don’t know if you’ve already addressed that, but if you haven’t could you please comment on that?

DAVID WEIDLICH: Well I mentioned that they had a windfall of about $20 billion dollars. I didn’t elaborate. They did promise when they were lobbying for that tax cut and the tax cut was supposed to raise everybody’s income by $4,000 dollars annually. Our bargain unit didn’t see that increase. They did however give every employee a $1,000 bonus at the very same time while eliminating jobs. So that’s what I have on that.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): So I am concerned about that because to say out of one side of your mouth, when you’re lobbying for a tax cut that it will help you to create jobs I’m just curious where those jobs are gonna be and I think it gonna hurt our State to see this layoff that is taking place, it’s, you know, not good for the State of Connecticut so I rally feel like it talkin out of both side of their mouth so I don’t know. Do you know where the jobs are going?

DAVID WEIDLICH: No, they are offshoring. They don’t report on. We do know there are support centers overseas but we don’t have an exact number. But we do know, you weren’t here for this, we did see them slash 12,000 jobs across the country since the tax cut.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Did you say 12,000 jobs?
DAVID WEIDLICH: Twelve thousand across the country.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): So how do they say out of the one side of their mouth they’re gonna create jobs and then they get the tax break and then they go the other direction and lay people off in this country. How does that work?

DAVID WEIDLICH: I think that’s just a question that needs to be addressed legislatively and in Washington, D.C.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): So I am familiar with the Bill that we’re raising here on Call Centers and providing notice and I, you know, I obviously support that. I think that giving workers as much advance notice of lay-off as possible is always a good idea. I also think that giving the union an opportunity to try and avert layoffs during a notice period is really important as well but obviously I think there is a bigger issue here with a company that, you know, so much an integral part of our nation’s economy taking advantage of a tax cut and then moving jobs out of Connecticut and potentially moving them out of the country, that is really unacceptable and I feel like we need to call them to task for that and I appreciate everything you and the union are doing to bring that to our attention and to hopefully we will respond, be able to respond in a way that will be effective.

DAVID WEIDLICH: Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Any other comments or questions? Seeing none, thank you again, always good to see ya. Thank you. Representative Ezequiel Santiago and Jessica Lora. Welcome, Representative and welcome Jessica. Is Jessica with you.
REP. SANTIAGO (130TH): At the moment, no she is not. I think I might be goin solo.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Well all right, the floor is yours.

REP. SANTIAGO (130TH): Thank you Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, Senator Miner, Representative Polletta and distinguished members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Ezequiel Santiago, State Representative of the 130th Legislative District. And I thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 7191, AN ACT INCREASING THE MINIMUM WAGE.

House Bill 7191 would provide Connecticut residents with a path to a living wage. The current minimum wage of $10.10 per hour is not enough to cover one’s basic needs without assistance from the state. There are 14 other states in this country that have higher minimum wages than Connecticut although we were among the first to adopt our current one. We must not remain stagnant while low-income workers bear the brunt of low wages and rising living expenses.

According to the Economic Policy Institute, the minimum wage increase would disproportionately raise the wages for African American and Hispanic workers. This would mean that about 45% of that population in the Connecticut workforce would directly and indirectly receive a raise. This increase in the minimum wage would also benefit one out of five veterans working.

Businesses across the nation received tax cuts in the year 2017. This includes Connecticut Corporations such as, Hartford HealthCare, Cigna
Health Insurance, Aetna, Inc. and more. These federal tax cuts will benefit the business in the long-term but not the workers. They may have been gifted with a bonus but that is not taxable income. Raising the Connecticut minimum wage will boost morale and productivity which in return will boost the economy. Low wage jobs often have high turnover and the increase in wages would incentive the employees to remain at their location. This would save corporations the cost of training new employees. Another benefit to businesses would be the increase in disposable income in Connecticut.

States surrounding Connecticut have higher minimum wages and have a plan in place for it to increase. Connecticut is falling behind and those who can afford to leave will. The living wage for a full-time single worker in Connecticut is about $19 dollars per hour and that increases when children are added to the picture.

In the 130th District of Bridgeport, that I represent, the median household income is $29,600 dollars. This not only falls under the overall median income in Bridgeport but it is significantly lower than the statewide median income of $74,168 dollars in Connecticut. I would not be doing my job if I did not fight for my constituents. I would not be doing my job if I did not support my constituents in being able to afford their basic necessities.

Raising minimum wage to $15 dollars an hour is the difference between living and surviving. For many people in my district and in the state, they are surviving, hoping and praying that an emergency does not occur. I fear maintaining our current minimum wage with the rising costs of everything in the
market will have a substantially negative effect on our economy. Raising the minimum wage, however, is an economic stimulus, allowing more circulation. Businesses rely on individuals and households to spend, but individuals and household rely on their income in order to spend. Everyone, business owners and workers, deserve a seat at the table, and we have been elected as a vehicle to find the solution to provide this outcome.

Supporting this Bill will only be the beginning of the work Connecticut must do in order to fight for the livelihoods of low wage workers. We must do better. Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you, Representative Santiago and thank you for doing such a fine job in representing the resident of Bridgeport. I think your testimony here is really important and being able to layout the facts that you did really help us I think understand the need for us to take this action which as you know I support as well. But I found it interesting particularly concerning that you mention that the median household income is $29,600 dollars and you know, a raise to $16 dollar I think come to $31,200 so it would be really helpful to those families in Bridgeport but it also really points out how, you know, how much work we have to do ahead of us.

REP. SANTIAGO (130TH): I thank you for those comments, it really could lift some people out of poverty. It really has the possibility to do so, so that is why I am here supporting it. Thank you for your comments.
SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you for coming in. Any other comments or questions? Okay, thank you very much.

REP. SANTIAGO (130TH): Thank you for your time.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Next, oh, next up is someone I recognize, Beverly Brakeman. Full disclosure this is my boss, this is my Director.

BEVERLY BRAKEMAN: Good afternoon Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, Senator Miner and Members of the Committee. My name is Beverly Brakeman and I am the Director of UAW Region 9A and I want to thank you for bringing these Bills forward today. You do have my written testimony so I am not going to bore you with reading through it.

We are here to support SB 2 and House Bill 5004 AN ACT INCREASING THE MINIMUM WAGE. You know, you’ve heard all the arguments for it, all the reasons why it is important and I was trying to think what I could say that might be different and I can’t really think of that except that, you know, I think I’ve heard a lot of people talk today about, well, you know if work in the fast food industry or your young, you don’t really need to make $15 dollars an hour and you know, that’s not really true. I’ve worked in the fast food industry, I’ve worked in the grocery industry and those are really hard jobs, you know, and you don’t time to get training in them. You just go in and you do it, you know and those jobs are just as important as other jobs where we don’t pay the minimum wage. Like I have two daughters, one of them who has her very first job out of college making $13.50 an hour going into people’s home and taking care of people who are disabled. She is a home healthcare provider, $13.50
an hour for that work. She is excited because it is 40 hours a week so she actually making a lot of money for her but. And then my other daughter was working as a dietary aide in the nursing home industry making $14 dollars an hour.

So and all of these jobs are important. They are important, the fast food industry is important as the service industry in every regard and I would really urge this Committee to support SB 2 and not a minimum wage proposal that requires young people to go through a training period that frankly in my personal opinion is kind of a joke because my daughter who just got out of college basically walked into her first home with a disabled person like on day one.

We are also here to support the on-call shift scheduling for reasons that have already been stated clearly. And I also haven’t been here all day but I don’t know if anybody has testified on SB 989 and I know I have some Uber drivers any Lyft drivers in the room over there, there was a lot more this morning and I want to thank the Chairs and this Committee for raising this Bill. We’ve all used Uber and Lyft and it is convenient, cost-effective and easy to use and frankly with teenaged daughters it has made me feel a little bit safer knowing that they weren’t going to get into a car after going to a party and have an option in Connecticut where there is not a lot of taxis. The UAW does represent taxi drivers though and I do think there needs to be away to create a level playing field for all drivers in the transportation network company. These drivers are independent contractors and don’t have any rights. They don’t have any protections and I really urge this Committee to really to tackle this
issue, this year. There are 30,000 estimated Uber and Lyft drivers and they don’t even have the basic protections that others do, so I would urge this Committee to pass this Bill and keep it moving forward and I don’t know if you’ll get to hear from them cause they’re like number 60 and 65 on the list but I wanted to recognize them here today cause they are already organizing themselves and I think we should hear what they have to say. So, Thank you. That’s it!

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. You mentioned the training aspect of the Bill and I think that what I understood you to say is that in some instances there is not enough or there is hardly any training so that is a concern I think we should all have. I think we’re, the other thing I know I’ve heard about is that even where there is training for instance in the fast food industry it is not training that would take three months for instance, that it would be much shorter training period and a much shorter learning curve to be fully proficient in those jobs and so my concern I think with training wages is that sometimes employers might take advantage of that and see it as a loophole to avoid paying the minimum wage. Is that what you were getting at?

BEVERLY BRAKEMAN: Oh, absolutely. I mean like I said about my older daughter working as a barista for years and years in, you know, the coffee shops and Dunkin Donuts and, you know, if she was trained one or two days, you know, that’s about it. So I think it is, would very clearly be a loophole that could be used.
SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Any questions or comments? Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman. You know, I’ve tried to read through I think its three Bills on minimum wage and I think the only Bill that suggests that there should be an offset is the Governor’s Bill, I want to be clear. When you refer to that as a joke, did you mean that Bill specifically or?

BEVERLY BRAKEMAN: No, what I was referring to is that, you know, a lot of these jobs there is not really training. I’m not referring to a Bill, I’m referring to the idea that a lot of these jobs that pay minimum wage actually have training that people should be paid less for and frankly I would argue that being trained for a job shouldn’t really be something that you get paid less to do. But was I saying that the Governor’s joke, Bill is a joke, no I was not. But I will tell you that we don’t support the Governor’s Bill. We think it should be SB 2.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman and I’ve heard that a couple of times already today that for that reason there are other people that are here today providing testimony that would prefer to see one that doesn’t have the offset. They hadn’t referred to it, I haven’t heard it referred to before as a joke, and I, anyway that’s the first time I heard that today, so thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): But I just want to be clear, Senator Miner just asked you if you were referring to the Governor’s Bill as a joke and I think you answered no it was to the idea that there should be a carveout for training, is that correct?
BEVERLY BRAKEMAN: Yes, I was trying to make a comment about the idea that we should pay less for people in training, not about the Governor’s Bill being a joke, I was not saying that.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Any other questions or comments? Okay, thank you very much. Next we are going back to the public officials list and I believe is, I think we’re up to Councilman Larry Deutch and Angel Candelario.

LARRY DEUTCH: Good afternoon, Committee Members and thank you for being in and for the opportunity to listen and to speak. I bring with me, and I will shelve down some brief comments, making them briefer so that Angel who sits next to me, who works in a fast food restaurant here in Hartford can also deliver his story.

Mine, I don’t think we’ve heard yet today from any urban city council people, council members or selectmen or persons I should say. And I would like to say on behalf of a municipal elected official that happens to be in Hartford that we also, most of us are very much in support of SB 2 and House Bill which also raises the minimum wage and we fill it will benefit the whole city as well as those in the larger state when you pass these statewide raising of the minimum wage.

Here in the City, in the City Council, we have to contend with recognizing the association that some of you have made today that there is not much point in raising the wage, minimum wage if on the other hand you shave down health benefits of your limit pensions. So I appreciate that some of you earlier today and in different Committee have linked the various ways in which workers and families can live
and that includes their healthcare and of course a good secure pension as well as a wage which we think should be as someone said, more than a minimum, minimum wage, that was said at an earlier hearing, it should be a living wage which we in Hartford have to some extent. So that it is important that all these issues be linked and secure pension after employment also should be given. As a city official we hate to have to balance one benefit the wage versus the healthcare and so on and so forth and we also appreciate that you’re trying to consider an ability to join a state plan for healthcare which would also benefit the cities thinking of all the time wasted when each city negotiates a separate agreement for healthcare, wages and so on, it would be helpful for all of our State Assembly to raise the age universally within the state. So with that, and we also think it would help to eliminate some of the disparities, the huge disparities within Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, Waterbury and the small towns as well that if we had a higher minimum wage of course the disparities would be lessened as many have testified.

Now, I would like to have Angel speak about his particular experience in a fast food place here in the City. Thank you.

ANGEL CALDELARIO: Thank you, good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. I am going to read a little bit quick for you. I’ll try my best to read, I’m gonna be slow about it. My name is Angel Candelario. I am a cancer survivor. I am a patient.

I was diagnosed with leukemia at age eight. My mother was a single parent who make sure me and my three siblings have food on the table, a roof over
our heads and clothes on our backs on an everyday basis. She juggled all of this while making sure I received treatment, something that was very difficult at my age and especially she was a minimum wage for her time back then was, you know, very very low.

So, it was real hard because, you know, our treatment for that moment was, you know generous but she still had to come out of it some out of her pockets and other times when I was going through it, I cannot remember the time when my mother had to go rush to the hospital and go call a cab, like $50 dollars just to get from Hartford, Connecticut back in the days to Exit 39A over to UConn Hospital.

So I can remember those times and it was just very rough so getting better was all that she could be focused on but how is that possible when the medical bills are mounting up. I have worked over 55 hours a week to make sure my mother received the care she deserves because now it’s my turn, I’m taking care of my mother. My mother suffers from breast cancer Stage 4, so right now I’m doing everything possible that I can to make any money, to save money, not fall back and lose my bills but still be able to maintain medication for my mother on a weekly basis. And now, I am not the only one putting my extra hours in and still struggling to get by there are hundred of thousands of men and women that are trying to just maintain a single job and not worry about getting fired cause that is the biggest worry that we have cause neither one of our jobs is secure. No matter where you are, or who you are, everyone is respectable so, that is our biggest stress everyday on a daily basis. We go to work and we have to worry about, you know, are we gonna get
fired, are we gonna slip, drop something, break something, you know, so that’s our biggest worry besides on our regular daily basis. Hard working people across Connecticut skip meals to pay their electric bills, ration prescriptions to buy their kids shoes. I know, I’m one. These are impossible choices and Connecticut can do better.

That is why I decided to join the Fight for $15 over three years ago. I joined not only to fight for a minimum wage but to bring awareness to the injustice so many of us face on a daily basis. We need to have a voice so we can all come together to demand things like better working conditions, pay increases and healthcare.

The $15 dollars an hour will mean people like me who are diagnosed with leukemia could still pay the rent and put food on the table even with medical bills. It would mean moms and dada who work year-round would earn an extra $3,000 plus dollars a year, enough to begin to make a difference. To take off that stress that they suffer from that we worry about, are we gonna pay our bill, our bill why our light got just got cut, the bill it $50 bucks, I’ve seen that, my lights got cut off a couple of weeks ago because I wasn’t working and not be able to it on time because I missed it by one day. So yeah, that would mean a lot for many, many, many of us. That’s why I am making it a priority to speak with Connecticut leaders so, and urge them to pass SB 2 and HB 5004 which would gradually raise the minimum wage from $10.10 to $15 dollars an hour my 2022.

Excuse me, let me say something, right. Do you know that by the time we get that $15 dollars an hour, if we get approved, right that everything else in our
lives and in our daily living will increase and your rent will increase, your food will increase, you’re going out will increase, you gas increases so by the time we receive the $15 dollars I bet, I’m sorry to say this but a lot of us will be homeless, a lot of us will be out of a job, homes and don’t know where to go next, don’t know how to pick up the next tool, so this is why we urge to please support on this Fight for $15 to pass these bills. Okay? A living wage is one that allows families to meet their basic needs without public assistance and that provides some ability to deal with emergencies like mine and plan ahead. It is not a poverty or survival wage okay. Okay, thank you my name is Angel Candelario again.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Angel, I’m sorry your name was written down wrong here, did you say Candelaria.


SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you for that. I think the Clerks have a lot to get everybody’s name written down in a big hearing like this. I do appreciate what you’re saying. I think particularly important is what you just said about by the time you get to $15 dollars if we pass this Bill then we already know that you are going to be paid, you know, that you’re still gonna struggles to make the bills because other costs go up and I realize that that is a problem but I also recognize that if we don’t do it, your bills are gonna go up and it will be even harder. So I want to thank you for the work you’re doing and sharing your stories. These are real life situations and it is really important for you to be here an talk about it so that we know when
we are picking up this life and death questions of raising the minimum wage and the other Bills that are before us, that there are people connected to them and it’s not just an abstract exercise, that it’s real so we really appreciate you taking the time to be here today.

LARRY DEUTCH: If I could just add as a medical provider we don’t want any increase in wage to be eaten up by increased out-of-pocket costs and that’s why it is also important to consider the public health option which I know in other Committees you are prone to do and of course they should go hand-in-hand as many people have said. And this case illustrates it.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Well just so you know we actually have a public option Bill in this Committee for public option for small businesses which I think we talked about earlier being very important to help small business to be able to afford to healthcare and help offset some of their costs so that they can provide any increase in the minimum wage. So I think seeing there is a wholistic approach and, you know, no just doing one thing and then having, you know a problem in another area crop us is our approach and why we raise these bills here. So thank you for your testimony.

LARRY DEUTCH: We also see this a primary source of disparities, there’s the inequities in our society as related to healthcare and our cities are mostly minority of course and suffer even more so than the State as a whole. So thank you for that.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I also wanted to let you know, I know you testified earlier that you hadn’t heard from other municipal leaders but we did have
Mayor Brown in here and he spoke I thought very well on behalf of the citizens and the residents of Hartford, so. Any other comments or questions? Thank you very much. Next up we have Shellye Davis. Hi, Shellye.

SHELLYE DAVIS: Good afternoon, my name is Shellye Davis and I am President of the Hartford Paraeducators AFT Local 2221, a local of more than 400 paraeducators working in the Hartford Public School System. I have also been a paraeducator for 27 years. Today I would like to testify in support of HB 7224 AN ACT CONCERNING PARAEDUCATOR PAY EQUALITY.

Paraeducators are a vital part of a student’s education. Without the paraeducators the quality of the education the student’s receive will diminish greatly, especially for our special needs students. With that we need to talk about the pay equity in the classroom. The paygrade of paraeducators varies across the State with many making below poverty wage. For people like me who want to make a career out of being a paraeducator the pay makes that nearly impossible. Paraeducators like teachers to not collect unemployment in the summer so many paraeducators have to try to find summer employment and sometimes that means taking on two to three jobs to support their families.

HB 7224 is a step in addressing the issues of fair pay and so I urge you to put this on a path to pay equity by supporting HB 7224. Thank you, if there are any questions I would be more than happy to answer.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you and thank you for the work you do and for having poured your life into
it. I know earlier we had an opportunity to comment on the importance of work of paraeducators and I know my daughter is in the school system, she is a teacher and she very often comments, my daughter-in-law, she often commented that she would be unable to do her job without the help of the paraeducators that work side-by-side with her, so I know how important your work is. Are there any questions from Committee members? Comments?

REP. PORTER (94TH): Just wanted to say thank you, I was telling Julie as you walked up, I hadn’t noticed you over there in the corner but I should have know you were in the room. I admire the way you always show up and show your support. And I’ll say to you what I said to the other paraeducator that testified that it’s irreplaceable, you can’t even put a price on what you do and the fact that you make the sacrifices that you do to make it happen is very much appreciated by me and I’m sure by many of the parents that you serve in Hartford. I will ask you quickly the same question I asked Julie’s constituent because they’re different districts, I’m just wonderin if you know what the pay is because of the work you do, right? The secretaries in your district and the custodians?

SHELLYE DAVIS: I can say I know some of the secretaries make over $50,000 dollars, I’m not to sure because that is a different union. Custodians I have no idea where they start but I can tell you the paraeducators coming in are making $24,000 dollars and those are people with a family of three and four people, so I can tell you paraeducators that poverty level but I would not be the one to speak to the secretaries or the custodians.
REP. PORTER (94TH): Okay, well thank you for that and I appreciate it. Thank you again for bein here today. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I’m looking for Ernestine Holloway. Is Ernestine in the room? Okay, I know she may have had to leave but if she is around we’ll try and get to here cause I know she has an appointment that she can’t miss and we did want to hear from her. Next on the list is Senator Ed Gomes. I like the sound of that. Senator Gomes who I was fortunate enough to get your office. It’s a nice office, thank you. [Laughter] In all seriousness Senator Gomes before you say anything let me thank you for the service that you performed for the State and as previous Chair of the Labor Committee, you know, I admired all your hard work over the many years. You’re a hard act to follow but I’m doing my best. I know you know how to turn on the microphone though. It’s up in front of you there. [Laughter] See how quick your forget. You’re not used to sitting in that chair are you?

SENATOR GOMES: I want to thank you Senator Kushner and Representative Porter, Ranking Member Miner just walked out of the room, I think he did that cause I sat in his seat.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): He’s back, he’s right behind you. [Laughter]

SENATOR GOMES: I’m before you to testify in favor of the minimum wage of $15 dollars. This isn’t the first time we’ve discussed this. I was on the other side of it. I see some of my friends sitting there. I see my friend sittin over there, it’s so strange to sit in this seat to tell you the truth. [Laughter]
I view the $15 dollar minimum wage as being a wage that families need to sustain themselves, to support their children and themselves and take care of the families and I think I’m a very unconventional Senator so I will say things that people wouldn’t like to hear but I think it’s ridiculous that we don’t have a $15 dollar minimum wage right now.

Some of the things that happen with minimum wage, I know, I’ve waited her quite a while I imagine there was a lot said about the minimum wage and I will be redundant and repetitive in sayin some of the things that I feel should happen or have happened. Some of the things we have like employers spend a great deal of effort and money securing advantages on products of the market. One of the ways they do this is advocate expend a tremendous amount of effort to suppress minimum wage levels. The minimum wage has not kept pace with inflation. Employers have benefited from this discount on labor costs, actually adjusted for inflation workers’ on minimum wage have been imprisoned by an economic power that existed 50 years ago. These Bills require the minimum wage to be indexed into the cost of living once it reaches $15 dollars per hour. This would ensure that the low wage workers brought improvements in U.S. living standards. Also retention rates for employers who have subminimal wage employees are not effective. Employees have no incentive to stay on due to the wages that they are earning. Corporate and small businesses benefited significantly from the federal tax cuts and Jobs Act in December 2017. Corporate income tax was slashed from 35 percent to 20 percent and small business reduction of 20 percent on their taxes. So why
should be stand-by and hope that they do the right thing and raise the starting wage.

Many businesses provided bonuses in lieu of wage rates. A bonus is a single payment that keeps base wage flat. Bonuses are not counted as salary income for pension or retirement calculations. Bonuses adversely impact unemployment calculations should workers lose their jobs because benefit formulas are based on salaries not bonuses. Some of these things that I have mentioned I guess other people have mentioned all through the day here. I have to say that the main reason that I feel that minimum wage should be in effect is because people need it raise their families. This $15 dollars an hour is not something that’s gonna make you rich. As a matter of fact it borders on a poverty level wage as it is and a subminimum wage is just sub-poverty level. I hope that this year here, that the legislators look at this thing and vote it in so that it will help families sustain themselves.

I also want to talk, leave something to say On-Call scheduling. That is another way of repressing wages having people working short hours, havin people not being able to care for their families because their hours are changing every time the employer feels like they should use them in the manner that they like. I remember, I’ll make a remark that goes way back when I first started in labor, and that’s about 50 years ago. Years ago we had people that we called the giants of industry and some of us called them the robber barons. Let me tell you something the robber barons are back. They are back in full force and all they do in order to make wages, we’re making billionaires or makin millionaires and right in this own state where we have Fairfield County.
which is the most richest county in the whole United States, we have abject poverty because the people workin on jobs below the minimum wage. We need to look out for people that need to look out for their families. If you have anything that you want to ask me you may do so. [Laughter]

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Well, I do want to say, well I’m gonna call on Representative Vargas first and then I’ll say what I wanted to say. Representative Vargas.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. It’s good to see an old friend and days back when George Farrier, you and I were in the trenches together as young men and when you retired from the State Senate last year you said that you’d be back to continue your fighting for the good people of Bridgeport and the good people of the State of Connecticut.

SENATOR GOMES: That ain’t what I said Ed.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): And I’m glad your back here.

SENATOR GOMES: What I said was what was I gonna due with all the time I have on my hands. I said I had to come back here to be a pain in you um-um. [Laughter]

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well I really appreciate you being here and supporting the $15 dollars an hour. Were fellow honorees of the Amistad Award in New Haven and so and but we were both honored in getting that for our activism and so you and I we partnered in so many efforts and I see my good friend Joelle here.

SENATOR GOMES: The lady that gave it to us.
REP. VARGAS (6TH): That’s right. So, you know, I know where you’re comin from brother and I am going to do everything I can to make sure we get that $15 dollars an hour. You know we tried in the past and we weren’t successful. I think this time we have a Governor who has agreed to sign the Bill if we get it before him, so we’ve very close. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR GOMES: And I think you have a good legislature this year that will make the mark.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Go ahead, Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman. It is good to see you former Chairman of the Labor Committee. So you and I have had the opportunity to work together even though we may not agree on everything over the last, I don’t know, six years or more probably and while we don’t share each other’s views on everything, I do have a great deal of respect for you. But I also have a great deal of respect for the many business men and women in the State of Connecticut that felt it almost their obligation certain personally to provide for their family but to provide for the broader family which in many cases are their employees especially during the recession. So I think I know you well enough to hope that when you refer to people as a robber baron it is not a blanket statement on all employers that even in the district that you used to represent many of the small business people there struggle on a day-to-day basis. It is important to them to put the key in the door everyday and provide a continuum of employment and so if it is their opinion that these may throw their business out of whack to some degree, whether we agree on that or we don’t I’d
like to think we can continue to agree that they are all part of the fabric of the State. And I do respect your passion, I’ve always respected your passion. You’ve never shown me whether you can actually fish and so I look forward to that opportunity at some point in the future but it is good to see you. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR GOMES: Let me make one remark, I’m not antibusiness and if I referred to somebody as robber barons it only applies to the people that have earned it and they have earned it. Let me tell ya something, we have, in this State here, it’s not bad to be rich, it’s not even bad for you, it’s not bad to be poor, it’s not bad to be middleclass. Let me tell you what I think happens now. You got billionaires here. We’ve made 17 billionaires in this State this year. We have 29,000 millionaires in this State and I come from the county that is the richest county in the whole United States and we have abject poverty in that state because of some of the things about because the people workin on jobs that have repressed wages. I’ve heard time and time again that the $15 dollars an hour minimum wage will hurt small business but you know who is makin these claims, big box business are speakin because it’s easier for them to speak for small business people and make some sort of effect rather than do what they’re doing. Big business boxes like Walmart. I’m gonna name people, like Walmart who put in such a health plan for their employees that they still qualify for HUSKY and do you know what HUSKY is that is Medicaid, guess who pays for that, you damn taxpayers pay for that. These people are bleedin us and there’s no, there’s no way that we should have
wages, people going to work everyday and cannot support their families that way. I know people that work two jobs, two jobs, I know one guy spoke to me, he worked at Dunkin Donuts, he worked for two different Dunkin Donuts to make a week’s pay. This on-call scheduling they, most of those people who work in the sub-minimum wage and they cannot even make a pay because of the simple fact that they cannot put in a one week on one job and go get another job because they’re on call scheduling changes during the week so they can’t get even into two low paying jobs.

I’ve been in this business, speaking for workers for a long, long time and I know what they need because I work with them. And there is no way in hell that $15 dollar minimum wage, $15 dollar minimum wage is going to curtail any business either small business or big business.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Once again it is good to see you and I appreciate the fact that we may not share the same opinion. I thank the chairman for the opportunity to.

SENATOR GOMES: And I think me and you, we always had a good workin relationship.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): We do, we do. Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you, Senator Gomes we’re gonna do our best to take care of this this session, so.

SENATOR GOMES: Thank you very much for allowing me to express my opinion.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Well I’m not gonna let you slip off without saying somethin to ya. [Laughter]
SENATOR GOMES: My pleasure.

REP. PORTER (94TH): And this is a comment not a question. But just welcome back. It is always good to see you. I have been blessed with an extraordinary Chair but I do miss you. You were the life of this Committee and I think you just gave us a small sample of that. But thank you so much for comin up and making the trek from Bridgeport and for sittin for the hours that you’ve sat and listened to the testimony and expressin your concerns and your views with us and I just wish you all the best as you are livin the retired life. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR GOMES: Let me make one more comment about this Committee. The day I heard first of all when Julie got elected that was one thing, then I heard she had gotten a job as Chairman, I said that is going to be one hell of a strong Labor Committee, Julie Kushner and Robyn Porter, two strongest women I ever ran into, hang in there, all right.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I know Representative Vargas you’ve got to get the last word in here.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well thank you, Madam Chair. Well you know, I’ve been, we’ve been friends for 40 years and now that you’re a Senator Emeritus I just wanted to say, when you mentioned, there is something you threw in my mind when you were talking about the small businesses, I’ve been a small business booster in my district for a long time. They know me as, you know, a person who always tries to help the small businesses but, you know, the crocodile tears of CBIA and some of these big box stores when you talk to the small business people they are always complaining about how they get short
tripped on the agenda of these large industry groups, they give them lip service but they rarely, they really respond more like to the Aetna’s, the Pratt & Whitney’s they don’t really respond so much to Joe’s Hot Dog place on the corner there. However when it comes to legislation they always put the small business guy out front and those are crocodile tears as you and I well know and the fact is that I believe, truthfully I believe and I’d like your opinion on this Ed, the small business guy on the corner, the guy who owns a little bodega, that person benefits more from the people in the neighborhood having a few extra bucks to spend on their small business, don’t you agree?

SENATOR GOMES: Yep, because a lot of ‘em don’t even go out their neighborhood to buy anything and they do their business with the neighborhood store.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): So if they had a few extra bucks they could spend a few extra bucks and it’s the same thing, I see the same thing with the farmers. You know the small farmers are a disappearing thing in America. But every Agri business, these huge Monsanto, huge Agri business, every time they want something from congress they put the little small family farmer to speak for them as if those were the people affected when in reality it’s going off to Wall Street the Agri business and then that little farmer there, they are just looking to take whatever few acres of lands they haven’t added to their Agri business. They would love to put all those small farmers out of business but they cry crocodile tears for the small farmer. I think it’s all the same thin, you know, the big businesses want to put the little businesses out of business. So I think if we are really pro-small business and for the mom and
pop shops, let's put a few bucks into those neighborhoods.

SENATOR GOMES: Thank you Eddie, you agree with me.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you Senator Gomes for your testimony this afternoon. Next we’ll have Reverend Ernestine Holloway.

REV. HOLLOWAY: Good afternoon, good evening one of the two cause I got out of here last night about 11:30 and got here this morning about 8:30, nine o’clock. I want to say thank you for having this forum. And for those who don’t know me, I am a part of CTRA the Connecticut Republican Assembly.

I’m also, you said Reverend Ernestine Holloway, I deal with Meriden, Middlefield, sometimes Waterbury whoever calls me, I’m a community advocate and when I ran for office I used Uber cause I don’t drive, I suffer with road rage [Laughter]. I’m the person in the backseat yelling at people so I probably should never drive. But as I use Uber and I hire two of the drivers, why I hired them was because I left a tip, I gave him a tip, he never got the tip. So I asked him, “Did you get my tip?” He said, “What tip.” I said well before they gave me money, I just had a pocket so I left you a couple of tips, he’s like I never got it. So but then I began to investigate how Uber was being treated, how the drivers were being treated and it bothered me. We got to level the playing field. Skyland owned them which is actually Google and Google got a lot of money so they can afford to not take away ten cents, 15 cents to nickel and dime them. I told people two years ago that this was gonna be a problem and then along came Lyft and that sort of problem. It’s only a problem because when seen it happen we did nothing
about it. So now here we are two years later and they are asking for help. They are independent drivers who pay taxes, who add to our economy and we owe them to step in and see what is going on with this because they add to the tax money that we spend, that $500 million dollars, that gas tax, that never makes into the lockbox that we voted on. They contribute. So when I heard they were coming up and somebody said are you gonna talk for Uber, I said I absolutely am because it’s wrong. And we have to bear an asset to transportation at least for me because I like to go everywhere. So we need to take a look at that and tell Skylark which is actually Google they can’t do that which is the AOC green thing movement that’s goin on.

I do want to talk about also, I was conflicted, I agreed one way and then after I heard the testimony today my heart softened towards the $15 dollars an hour. I think there is a misunderstanding also and I had to say I’m the one that misunderstood and I am woman enough to say, “I didn’t get it” I still don’t understand a lot of it. I think that because AT&T, Amazon, Walmart has made a lot of the smaller companies look bad. So when we look at the union, I was taught that the union got all the money, not the people that work there, I’m talking about all the big hierarchy beyond their payrates, but when I saw 1199 today, I remember 14 years old being on a picket line with ‘em in New York City when they were closing hospitals and they were losing their jobs, I was 14. So my mother was also in the other union as a home attendant. I gave up my job to take care of my daughter and I am the working class poor. I make $9,225 dollars a year and that’s what I live off but I am also the American dream that you describe
because I’m a girl from the projects who was taught by David Dinkins, the first black mayor of New York City, I became an advocate and I am really good at what I do and I ran for mayor and for state rep and I never would have believe it beyond my wildest dreams that I would be able to do it. But it’s still not fair. If I went back into the workforce today, I would make $10.10. I don’t know if I like that. I have more experience, no offense meant, than some people who work in this building. I’ve been a Reverend for over 30 years. I’m 50, I’m a community advocate. People can’t really pay me what I’m worth but I do it anyway. That is why I only make $9,200 and whatever a year. But it’s hard so I can’t imagine not giving them that much money.

I think what people don’t understand is that it’s gonna be a little bit at a time, it’s not straight $15 dollars. Because of the hoopla, and I’m gonna say hoopla instead of that other word, they don’t get it. So I talk to republicans and democrats because I’m also a republican, and what I hear was, you don’t understand. No, you don’t understand because I’m a Black woman and I know what it is to get cheated because I worked at McDonald’s and Burger King and I worked at Stop-N-Shop and they never paid me for what I was worth. I was a manger and I made seven dollars an hour working at Burger King when my counterpart who was Caucasian made $12 dollars, so I get it. So today was a lesson for me and I think that I know what the workin class Caucasian people make, they make what we make, nothing. That’s why we got of trailer homes that look really crazy, that’s why people in the projects struggle. But I am going to say this to you, I’m gonna give you a story from Meriden. We tore down a
housing development, I don’t know how you all let that happen, and when they tore it down we had problems with the mall, and so they said to me, Rev, what do you think the problem is, the problem is the poor people, the working class poor that lived in the mall that you kicked out and displaced cause you didn’t want poor people living in your neighborhoods are the ones that spent their money that they shouldn’t have been spending at that mall. So now they’re not there and guess what, the mall is bankrupt because those poor people ain’t’ shoppin adding to that economy.

So I think we have a lot to work on and then I looked that if they put in tolls and this is what I told them last night, if you put in all these crazy tolls, the average worker that works at McDonalds is $10.10 an hour, after they pay rent, light bills, gas bills, telephone, buy the babies some shoes out of Savings and Goodwill because that’s all they’re gonna be able to afford then you’re gonna put these tolls in, where the heck that money coming from. So I added the $15 dollars in there cause I like to do math a little bit, guess what? The cost of housing is going up if you’ve got Section 8, and if you get food stamps and you give them this raise, and you guys don’t work on the whole thing because we work on pieces and when you work on pieces it never gets done, somebody thought somebody else doing it and when it falls through the crack, oops it’s not my fault. Yes it is cause we need to work on the whole things. There is no such thing as a half a man or half a woman, you’re either gonna get it right or have a bigger problem later on. This is why we have this problem. We let big business tell us what to do and squish the little people so now the working
class, the middleclass is becoming poor, and the poor is getting poorer. We did this. We did it. So I ask the question to a couple of people in the hallway, when you called me, that’s what I was askin, I’m not for this, they said why. I said cause I’m that Black woman that will never make the salary that you make because of the color of my skin. I get it all the time. I’m in politics like some of you. They look at my skin before they look at my worth. And even if they know my worth they still well never pay me what I am worth. So how do we fix it? How do we say, and one thing, Senator Mooney some of the stuff he said bothered me because there is no way you can’t tell me that electronics is not gonna play a part in takin some of these job cause that’s not true. Because if it was true, wasn’t true, Stop-N-Shop wouldn’t have that big electronic thing that they have in their supermarket, sweeping floors and not hiring people to do the cleanup because they have something that’s electronic that’s doing it. So we have to look at all of that, not just say, well the small business is not, yeah they are gonna suffer because they may not be able to pay $15 dollars an hour if you’ve got five employees but we can’t let AT&T, Amazon continue to get these tax breaks and not take care of the people of Connecticut. I got clients from Amazon that have fallen on the job yet can’t get workers’ comp, they can’t get a day off, who said they won’t let them even eat lunch on time. So maybe if we stop giving big businesses incentives and focus on the little guy, they can expand and take care of Connecticut because guess, what, the small businesses they are the ones that make the economy thrive anyway. And if you get rid of the poor people guess what’s gonna happen, you ain’t’
gonna have anybody to shop in all those stores. Cause I love to shop. The big girl’s gotta buy a dress.

REP. HALL (7TH): That’s right. Absolutely Reverend Holloway and we appreciate you coming out this afternoon to provide and I appreciate the fact that you came in with certain thoughts about some of the issues that we’re talking about today and through testimony of the various people that have spoken today that allows you to really think about how these polices and proposals will impact them on a personal level so we thank you. Are there any questions or comments for Reverend Holloway?

REP. PORTER (94TH): Just want to say thank you. You’ve been really patient today. You’ve been here for a very longtime and I’m glad we could accommodate you and give you the opportunity to share your testimony with us and I’ll just echo what the good Representative said, I can really appreciate the fact that you came in, weighin in one side and was swayed to the other side. I believe that is a powerful story and that story has the power to change people’s viewpoints, so thank you for your honesty in that.

REV. HOLLOWAY: I think that I’m conflicted. I am, I need to be honest with you. I’m conflicted. I am not totally on one side but I am in the middle. And I am in the middle because I don’t know how the little business guy is gonna make it and that is my concern. I’m not concerned about the big people cause guess what, they’re getting richer but I’m concerned about the little guy, the mom and pop shop that can’t buy two dollars of insurance and I’m gonna say this and I’m gonna keep it moving cause I
got sworn in today so cause I’m on a disability board and I need to sign some paperwork and swear in but I do want to day this. My friend makes a lot of money. She runs Serenity House Ministries for me, for free. But when I look at her paycheck and her taxes and I see what she lives off, even though she makes what you were saying $25 dollars an hour, but it don’t add up when she brings it home, it only looks good on paper. And I look at the taxes that she paid and how she shops, and how she struggling to survive, it’s a wake up call. It’s really a wake-up call. And with me, $10,000 dollars a year, I make it. I struggle, I’m a cancer survivor too, so I gotta pay for that medicine like everybody else, by daughter has a brain injury, I spent 52 days out of a year in an ER and admitting and I can’t afford the medication. So I get it. But I am still conflicted because if we do this, what harm would it do to the little guy and we got to look out for them to. But we also need to go out to Amazon, Walmart and all these big businesses, they need to pay their fair share. Cause they’re not doin it.

REP. HALL (7TH): That’s right, absolutely. So Thank you so much for coming out this afternoon, appreciate it and good luck tonight.

REV. HOLLOWAY: Thank you for allowing me to speak. It was a privilege and an honor.

REP. HALL (7TH): Have a good night. Next we have Shomit Segumata.

SHOMIT SEGUMATA: Good afternoon Representative Porter, Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Shomit Segumata. I live in New Britton and I am a homecare provider and member of the SEIU 1199. I am here today to ask you to
support passage of legislation that will raise the minimum wage to $15 dollars an hour.

I care for an individual with a traumatic brain injury. He is pursuing a degree in Early Childhood Education at Tunxis Community College and a typical day involves me picking him up from his apartment, driving him to school, helping him organize, helping him take notes, keeping him company and helping him navigate his way around campus which is more of a challenge with his injury.

I also take him to festivals, concerts and museums and helping him develop the social skills he needs to more effectively move throughout the world. One of the thing I love most about this job is that being able to provide direct help to someone that needs it. Without my care my client would feel lonely, feel trapped, unable to get out - he doesn’t drive, and he has trouble making friends and talking to people. Furthermore his parents will soon be moving to Pennsylvania so he will be even more dependent on his caregivers than ever before.

Despite the importance of the role people like me play, until recently companions made $11.50 an hour. Thanks to the assets of our union we now make $14.75 and will soon reach $15 dollar. But even that is barely enough to survive. Despite living in a studio apartment, driving a 10-year-old Kia Sonata, and generally leading a frugal life, I’m living paycheck to paycheck and depleting my savings just to stay afloat. As if the wages aren’t enough many of us who work in homecare are denied the basic rights and privileges enjoyed by our counterparts and white collar professions. We do not for example get reimbursed for job expenses. I drive my client
to school every day and I sometimes drive him as far as New Haven and Springfield. I do not get reimbursed for car insurance. I do not get reimbursed for gas. Sometimes if my client wants to go to a festival or to see a band that he likes, I have to buy my own tickets to pay for food, tickets and parking out of my own pocket cannibalizing what little I earn and leaving me with not much at all.

Another example is we don’t get vacation or sick days nor do we get any compensation for cancellations on the part of the client. If our client happens to cancel minutes before the shift there is nothing we can do about it. If you cancel on a therapist or a personal trainer or a lawyer you get a cancellation fee, you still pay for your hour but we do not get such a benefit.

I joined the union in order to help myself but help my colleagues fight for what is fair. The pathway from $11.50 to $15 dollars is significant progress but we still have a long way to go before we make a living wage. Our pathway to $15 dollars an hour for all working people should be a basic human right. I am calling on everyone here today to vote, “yes” on this necessary first step to putting all working families on a path to a living wage. Thank you.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you so much for your testimony this afternoon. Any questions or comments from the Committee? Thank you so much for coming out this afternoon. Next we have Representative Joe de La Cruz.

REP. DE LA CRUZ (41ST): Thank you to the Committee, you’re gonna have a long day here it sounds like. To my right here actually is my business manager, you all know I’m in Local Union 40, Machine Metal
Worker, I think everybody in this room knows where I stand on minimum wage and the reasons I do. I want to give time to my business manager here to share some of the reasons why the union who, you know, again make a good wage and why we think it’s important for this minimum wage to go through.

DAVE ROCHE: Thank you, Representative de la Cruz and it’s an honor to sit next to you here, kind of a different thrust from our union meetings and other events but to the Committee thanks for having us here. You know I haven’t probably haven’t had to deal with minimum wage since for about 40 years ago when I was a young man working myself and so it’s hard for me to kinda look at all the things about it and tell how it would be.

But as I sat here today and listened to all the testimony I tried to put myself in that position of being in my 20s, 30s and having to work for minimum wage and we make a good wage. We do well but I’ve dug holes financially in my day and it’s easy to dig holes and I don’t mean with a shovel, I mean financially. It’s easy to dig em and it’s really hard to get out of ‘em. I had trouble getting out of ‘em making a decent wage. So I can only imagine what it took for some body makin minimum wage today to get out of them holes.

I kinda thought last night, my grandson called me. He calls me “P”. He as a little bit of a speech issue so he only calls me “P” which I love. He says, “P WWE is comin to the Hartford Civic Center, Excel Center sometime in May can we go?” And instantly I said, “Yes.” Right, I’ll get the tickets whatever it takes. So I was sitting here today and I thought about that question. I thought
about what the answer would have been if I was collecting minimum wage. It would have been a whole lot different. That is a quality that I am going to have with my grandson that other people aren’t gonna have that ability or that opportunity to have. I think, you know, when you talk about the cost of milk goin up, give you a newsflash, milk’s going up anyway and any other product that’s out there because that’s what it does. So we got to keep up with that.

When you talk about technology, I look at technology in a different light. I don’t see it as a detriment to my business and it’s in my business, I see it as an opportunity because yeah, there may be some robot running around that floor but somebody has to learn to fix that robot when it breaks down, somebody has to learn to build that robot so it goes out there and cleans them floors. So maybe one door closes but there’s another one that’s gonna open.

It’s just time to do this thing. Let’s get it off the table, let’s raise it and, you know, when we went up to $10.10 I don’t milk went up that much so I don’t think it’s gonna affect a whole lot to be honest with you. I do know that its gonna affect the people’s lives and it’s gonna give them a better quality of life, it’s gonna let them spend time with their kids and their grandkids and that’s what’s important and that’s what we’re missin in this country today. So I hope you can look forward to passing this Bill so we can get moving and get people moving in the right direction.

REP. DE LA CRUZ (41ST): And I want to leave you with this, to me when you walk into a store because I hear over and over again, even from our union
members, we fight our own union members on minimum wage, when you walk in, don’t ask the question of why should that guy or girl make $15 dollars an hour ask the question of why am I paying the four dollars a hour for them to live when the person that owns McDonalds is living fine. So as a legislator I’ve notice, we can’t, and we’ve been doing this the last few years, we’ve been beating up the State workers to the point where we’re trying to make them earn what folks do on minimum wage as that is going to be our end all solutions to our problem when it is actually the opposite way that we should be goin so, you know, if you ever go into a company or even I tell the local businesses and I know a lot of ‘em that the $15 dollar minimum will help everybody. When they say raise all bods if they are sending their people home at night and this is true and two people working minimum wage as a family working at Walmart and one at McDonalds both work 40 hours, and both of the towns I represent when they walk into that affordable housing unit that is $1600 dollars a month market rent and they are only paying $300 dollars because that is what they pay on the sliding scale, who’s paying for it. That’s why I said we live in an imaginary world. If we all want to believe that this is going to be able to last forever, where businesses will be subsidized for the next 100 years where companies like Walmart are going to pay people $10.10 an hour and it really takes $15, or $16 of $20 dollars to live, we’re lying to ourselves and our country, I’m afraid, everyone talks about billionaires I think in the next 10 years we are going to create a trillionaire. We have two trillion dollar companies in this country right now as a result of this last big tax cut we had and are we any better. You know, minimum
wage go up, they’re talking about workin wages. Dave and I are both members of a union that just went up from a zero deductible to a $4,000 thousand dollar deductible. We took a $1.60 an hour out of our pay to shore up our health insurance, that’s a pay cut. So when I see around the country how wages have grown, so me the money and I will show you my pocket and it’s thinner than it was just two years ago. So again I’m so happy to be at least a piece of this. Last year I cried on my way home at the end of session. I don’t know, you guys don’t know what happens in the backroom, in the backdoors. Rep Porter started out with a Fight for $15, those were the buttons, that was the slogan, that’s what we were gonna do. As it got pared down to nights near the end we said how about $14 dollar, how about $13 dollars, how about $12 dollars? The last night we asked people to put on the board 90 cents to get Connecticut minimum wage up to $11 dollars to get us close to where we were with Rhode Island, Massachusetts and New York and the answer was overwhelming no. We do not have the votes, we don’t have the support for 90 cents. I left almost in tears that night because it showed me that the legislature didn’t understand the plight of the regular people which is what we’re up here to serve and this year I feel way better about it. I feel like there is a momentum, all these folks coming in here every night, they can’t afford to be here at night, they probably miss work, we know their finances because if they’re fighting for $15 it’s because they don’t make it now. I’ve been fortunate and I know Dave has, so any questions you guys have, please ask.
REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you so much Representative de la Cruz and Mr. Roche. Are there any questions or comments for them? Thank you so much for coming out this afternoon. Next we have Howard Francis. Okay next we have Representative Anne Hughes.

REP. HUGHES (135TH): Thank you Chairman and thank you Labor Committee for hearing this testimony for we are here in support of raising the minimum wage, finally for once and for all and I am so proud to cede my time to Janee Woods how is really going to give you the fire.

JANEE WOODS: Thank you, Representative Hughes. My Woods Weber and I live in West Hartford. I am a member of the State Committee for Connecticut Working Families Party, and I am here to testify in favor 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 they will gradually increase the minimum wage to $15 dollars by 2022 and then index it to inflation. I know firsthand why this increase is deeply needed by the most vulnerable families in our communities.

As a young child, I watched my mother, a single mother, work as a cashier in a corner store, earning a minimum wage salary of a little over $3 dollars per hour. She worked hard and tried her best to budget but her minimum wage earnings were never enough to cover our basic living expenses, even with the assistance of food stamps and Section 8. I remember, a couple times a month, watching her reach into her purse and slowly fold out each dollar, carefully smoothing it flat and counting under her breathe. I never saw her count past $17 dollars and
usually the amount was much lower. I always saw the worry in her eyes. There were no savings, no bank accounts to dip into if one of us got sick and needed medicine or some other inconvenience or stroke of bad luck happened. Seventeen dollars, which is $39 dollars in today’s money, however hard earned, is never enough to take care of the basic needs of a family.

Just like when I was a child and minimum wage was inadequate, today’s working families cannot afford to live on the current minimum wage, which is $10.10 per hour. Connecticut’s living wage, the cost of maintaining a basic standard of living, is actually $19.08 for a single adult. It’s $40.48 per hour for a single parent with two children, like my mother.

I’m not here today just to tug on your heartstrings. I’m here to testify to facts that make raising the minimum wage not only the moral and just action to take, but also the sensible and economically sound approach to ensuring our state’s fiscal wellbeing and continued growth.

In the first year of a phased-in increase, full time workers could earn up to $3,000 dollars more. That’s enough to make a tangible improvement in the life an early childcare worker, janitor, healthcare worker, or a cashier like my mom. Raising the minimum wage will begin to reverse decades of growing economic inequality and simultaneously create new levels of consumer demand.

In addition to giving working families the value of their hard work, raising the minimum wage is a step toward closing the racial pay gap. The minimum wage disproportionately impacts workers of color, who are overrepresented in low-wage jobs that do not offer
fair wages. Black and Latinx workers are 26% of the state workforce and almost one-third would benefit from an increase in the minimum wage.

Women are also disproportionately employed in jobs with unfairly low wages. Because of these racial and gender gaps, more than 37 percent of Black and Latinx women would directly benefit from an increase in the minimum wage.

Raising wages benefits our society and helps people be more self-sufficient. Workers who earn more spend more disposable income in the local economy, supporting businesses and paying more in sales tax. Workers who earn more are less reliant on safety net services, such as childcare subsidies, SNAP, Husky or housing assistance. This means taxpayer dollars become available for other investments in our communities.

I ask you to support working families by passing SB 2 and HB 5004. Please make the right decision, the moral and just decision, to increase the minimum wage.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you so much, Representative Hughes and Ms. Woods for coming out this afternoon to testify. Are there any questions or comments for either. Thank you so much for coming out this afternoon. Next we have Michelle Hart and Christian Crowley.

MICHELLE HART: Hi, I’m Michelle Hart, I’m not feeling good so I asked my friend Norm to read for me.

REP. HALL (7TH): Okay, no problem. Thank you.
NORMAN PELOQUIN: Good afternoon, Senator Kushner, Representative Porter and members of Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Michelle Hall and I am a homecare worker from Baltic and I am proud member of 1199. I got into home care after taking care of my grandmother who had Alzheimer and dementia. I cared for her for seven months before she passed away pursuant to a promise I made grandfather to keep her at home under my care. Since then I have cared for four other clients over seven years.

When I care for somebody I become attached to them and they become like family to me. I feel that God put me on this earth to be a homecare worker and take care of others with compassion and positivity. Everyone who knows me can tell you I am extremely proud even in the face of challenges. I always have a smile on my face but throughout my life there has been several times when the low wages have hurt me. When you are a low wage worker, you have no cushion. So any accident can take a huge toll on you physically, financially and emotionally. Since I sustained an injury that caused my lung to collapse because I didn’t have paid leave or any savings and I was making $14 dollars an hour I had to undergo surgery to have my lung put back to my chest wall and then go back to work the very next day because I couldn’t afford to miss a day’s pay. I worked through the pain for a long time because I had no other choice.

Then last fall a disk in my back broke in half as a result of lifting a client. At that time we homecare workers didn’t have access to workers’ comp either. I could barely walk or drive much less take care of my children and I pushed myself to continue
working with my one client because I need the income. However I physical couldn’t continue to work for the second client who required lifting. Without the second job I had to reach out to Catholic Charities for help. Today I am thankful for the union, we won workers’ comp insurance and $15.25 an hour that finally went into effect in January. I currently care for three different clients, homecare clients to make a fulltime living and I love what I do. Unlike the progress I made, tens of thousands of workers and families like mine are still making poverty level wages. No one should have to choose between working to stay afloat or never to get into a crisis. Having a minimum of $15 dollars an hour wage across the State is an important step towards helping working families like mine to survive on a day-to-day basis and we need to make wages to allow us to live with dignity and take care of our life without stress and a little for the unexpected. Please consider this testimony and vote yes for the $15 dollar minimum wage.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you so much and I appreciate you helping out your fellow union member and I’m sorry that you weren’t feeling this evening. Any questions or comments? Thank you so much for coming out. Christian Crowley. Good afternoon.

CHRISTINA CROWLEY: Good afternoon, Senator Kushner, Representative Porter and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Christian Crowley. I am before you today to testify in favor of the state minimum wage to $15 dollars per hour.

I started homecare at a tender age. My mom sent me to spend the night with my elderly neighbor when I was only eight years old. My mom was a single mom
of eight children, believing in helping others and was relieved to not have to fully provide for me anymore. Our neighbor that lived in England and she had no one to look after her mother. I didn’t receive pay for my work but I was responsible for cleaning her house, making her breakfast and washing her. It was through this work that I feel in love with caregiving. A couple of years later I wasn’t just sleeping at her house but living with her fulltime. She was a diabetic and the doctor amputated her finger so relied on me like she would of her own hand. I would go to school and then come back and take care of my neighbor’s personal needs.

I moved to the United States when I was 27 years old. When I first started caregiving in Connecticut I was only making $8.75 an hour. My husband wasn’t able to work so I was the only wage earner. We couldn’t afford our rent for an apartment on my wages so we rented a room in a house. I worked three jobs and sometimes worked as many as four jobs at once. I worked everyday in the month. I was like a machine. I worked one job from 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. My second job was from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. My third job from 3:30 p.m. until 6:30 p.m. My overnight shift was in a nursing home so I wasn’t able to sleep. The most I could sleep was short in between my jobs. I didn’t have a car so I have to use the bus. I would race to the bus between jobs. I was so stressed that I would show up at work late and my pay would be docked. My stress was at about 210 percent level. I became depressed and my doctor had to prescribe me medication. Thanks to my union SEIU District 1199 my wages as a homecare worker has increased to $15.25 an hour. I have been able to
cut down on my hours and not have had to be constantly running from one job to another.

It’s amazing only having to work one job. I no longer feel depressed and my doctor took away the antidepressant medication. I now have time to study and I am taking classes to get my GED. I dream to become a nurse. I urge you to pass a minimum wage increase to $15 dollars to help workers like me to be believe and pursue my education and my dreams. No one should suffer with the stress as struggling to survive on low wages. This is a story that to many of our caregiver like me experience. We do a professional job to keep our most vulnerable healthy and safe at their homes while we all deserve to be paid in a manner that will provide us with basic needs and respect.

REP. HALL (7TH):   Thank you so much, Ms. Crowley for coming out this afternoon and sharing your story and appreciate so much the testimony you provided this afternoon. Any questions or comments? Thank you so much for coming out this afternoon. I appreciate it. Next we have Representative David Michel. Next we have Howard Frances. And as folks we have so many people on the list this afternoon and into this evening that we do have a three minute time limit and you’re gonna hear a bell and be respectful of that and we appreciate it. Go ahead Mr. Frances. Please turn on your microphone. Press the button and turn on your microphone.

HAROLD FRANCES:  Hi, my name is Howard Frances I was here today and I am here to testify one more time again. I work at Fresh River Health Care, about 12 years now and I started at $10 dollars an hour and I’m working there 12 years now and I work very hard
and I do housekeeping and when I clean it is a wow, because you can see the difference in the place and I’m not here only for housekeeping, I am here for the resident because I love the residents so much and I see a resident taking a barrel out to the trashcan and I say, “Darling you don’t need to do that, I’m here to take care of you, just enjoy yourself.” And so right now I’m here to let you know that I really deserve $15 dollars an hour, right because I work very hard. I work very hard and take care of the residents.

I let people know that housekeeping at a nursing home is different from when you clean your house. We have to face a lot of different things in a nursing home and housekeeping is number one. First thing people walk inside they see the cleanliness of the place and no body, the resident and bring in a nursing home that’s filthy and so right here I’m gonna shout and let you know that I am working there and I really deserve the $15 dollars an hour. Thank you.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you for coming up this afternoon, I appreciate your testimony. Any questions or comments? Thank you so much for coming up. Next we have Senator Moore. Next we have Ivy Wilkins. Tim Riddle.

TIM RIDDLE: Hello. My name is Tim Riddle and I am here to support for your support for HB 7224 AN ACT CONCERNING PARAEDUCATOR PAY EQUITY. Just going to give you a brief overview of that I do. I am a Registered Behavioral Therapist currently employed by the Brookfield Public School System, Brookfield, Connecticut.
I am going to give you a description overview. The State average for a Registered Behavioral Therapist is $15 and now I want to give you a little overview of exactly what we do, what RBT is. Behavioral therapy is an umbrella term for types of therapy that treat mental health disorders. This form of therapy seeks to identify and help change potentially self-destructive or unhealthy behaviors. The focus of treatment is often on current problems and how to change them. Additionally behavior therapy is focused on helping individuals understand how changing their behavior can lead to changes in how they are feeling. The goal of behavioral therapy is usually focused on increasing the persons engagement and positive socially reinforcing activities. We work directly with individuals in the autism spectrum, disorders, developmental disabilities, learning cognitive disabilities, motor disabilities and visual disabilities.

The responsibilities, some of the primary responsibilities of what we do as a behavioral therapist. Behavioral therapists provides one-to-one behavioral interventions to children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We work directly with individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders. The behavioral therapist is primarily responsible for the direct implementation of behavior and analytic services.

Data measurement to monitor the progress and effectiveness of individualized treatment plans. Skill acquisition, behavior reduction documentation reporting. We teach receptive and expressive language to nonverbal children. Hygiene, task analysis which breaks down steps for hygiene into small sequential steps.
We teach cooking, folding shirts, hanging shirts, table setting, sweeping floors and washing and drying clothes. Very easy stuff for us but it’s called task analysis. Every little part of folding a shirt is broken down for a student to understand.

In closing I urge all Committee members to support HB 7224 Paraeducator Pay Equity.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you so much Mr. Riddle for coming out this afternoon. Any questions or comments? Next we have Julie Cinnamon.

JULIE CINNAMON: Hi, my name is Julie Cinnamon. I’m a paraprofessional in the Fairfield School District. I have been a para for 22 years.

Everything he said, I do. We do all that stuff. We have become a teacher, a nurse, an OT, a PT and a psychologist to all our students. This is the life of a Para, seven hours a day, five days a week. If we have concerns and we have to have discussions with our teachers we do it on our own time, not on paid time. All this is provided to the school system and we receive the same salary as a grocery clerk and sometimes we don’t even get healthcare benefits. We travel a slippery slope here. When No Child Left Behind became a law and Paraprofessionals were required to have a degree in specific training we were promised an equitable salary. This never happened.

Paraprofessionals now require more training for the new student population. However the lack of equitable salaries has forced many of us to take second and third jobs. We can’t do it on the salaries we get. We are unable to live in the district we work in because we can’t afford housing
we’re so poorly paid. Districts have difficulty attracting good Paraprofessionals because nobody can afford to have this wage. We can’t get training after school because we are going to our second job. This causes a problem in turnovers and you know as well as everyone in this room knows that consistency in issue we had, and have had for years, is affordable healthcare. When affordable healthcare period is offered to us, Paras tend to pay a higher percentage than any other staff member in the district. For example, I pay 25 percent contribution for a spouse and myself. That is approximately 33 percent of my salary. A custodian pays less of a percentage and it is ten percent of their salary. A teacher pays less of a percentage and it is less than ten percent of their salary. A secretary pays 19 percent of their salary.

I’ve been doing this, I was here 12 years ago saying the same thing over and over. We need help, we go to our districts, we have the unions, we’ve been fighting this battle for such a longtime. We are expected to do equivalent work of the teachers, specialists, nurses. We do it all and yet we don’t get paid for it. I am asking the Committee to take the reigns and provide this vehicle so that the Paras will get an equitable salary.

Now the one question that everybody asked after speaking was what was the comparison in salaries so take this down so you can tell everybody who was here. Para’s make $14.13 in my district an hour. Custodians make $18.40. Secretaries make $19.87 and something called an Ed Trainer which is a Para that has a four year degree make $22.12. Now I have to tell you that the custodian and the secretary only have to have a high school education. A Para has to
have 60 hours for an associate degree to get the job or they have to take a Para Pro test and if you had to take that Para Pro test it’s a very difficult test and not easy.

REP. HALL (7TH): I’m very familiar with that.

JULIE CINNAMON: It’s like taking a TACT test.

REP. HALL (7TH): Absolutely I understand.

JULIE CINNAMON: We have to have the education. We’re expected to be trained and yet we make less than someone who only needs a high school education. I thank you for listening to me and thank you for staying.

REP. HALL (7TH): No, thank you. Thank you for coming out this afternoon and just to let you know my mom was a Paraeducator in Hartford Public Schools for a longtime so I understand exactly where you’re coming from in the struggles of Paras. So thank you so much for your testimony this evening. So just so everyone knows that there are a lot of other meetings and Committee meetings and different things that Representatives and Senators have to attend to so this is not indicative of what they think or feel about your testimony just want everybody to be clear about that, it’s just there’s a lot going on this particular day with regards of different meetings and Committee meetings and public hearings that my colleagues have to attend to. So having said that, next we will have Representative McGee.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): My testimony says Good Afternoon, I suspect I should be saying Good Evening! Good evening Representative Hall. I really appreciate your comments with respect to other Committee meetings of Committee members at various meetings
and there is the deadline, I get it so I appreciate you though being here and listening very intently to all of the advocates and individuals testifying before you today.

My name is Brandon McGee, State Representative from the 5th Assembly District and also the Co-Chair of the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus so I am delighted here with my friend Diane who is also going to speak a little bit about Paraprofessionals but I just want to leave you a comment with respect to minimum wage and I am not going to read my entire testimony. My testimony was submitted, I think, if not it will be.

There is a rise in income inequality and this is driven by stagnant wages. It is estimated that since 1979 the drag on our economy caused by an upward distribution in income has caused loss of GDP of up to four percent a year. Increasing the minimum wage, which I’m sure you’ve been hearing all night to $15 dollars, I honestly would say $20 dollars, but $15 dollars will provide businesses with a healthy working middleclass. This will also help to improve the worker and company morale as workers will feel more valued in the workplace and I’ll end on this note. Research has shown that increasing the minimum wage can act as a catalyst for manager to improve productivity and efficiency, increase the hourly pay will reduce the amount of employee turnover leaving managers with a more proficient and motivated workforce. So I’ll end on this note, Representative. I really applaud this Committee for bring this measure back before the State Legislature but I think we need to move on this and this would definitely help and uplift thousands of individuals that give their life everyday to some of the most vital and critical
services provided in this State. So I am going to yield the rest of my time to Diane.

DIANE FRASCA: Thank you. Well, good evening. My name is Diane Frasca. I work as a fulltime Paraprofessional. I am currently the President of our Paraeducators Union for my school district in Ellington. I come here today in regard to House Bill 7224 to ensure Para equity. We are in much need of your support.

I believe that without Paras in public schools they would fall apart. We take on many responsibilities. We assist teachers in the classroom, we provide support for teaching one-to-one and often groups of children including bilingual students. We even work cafeteria and recesses. Sometimes we act as the school psychologist. We deescalate difficult situations and for some we have to become medically certified and physical and psychological trained. That only names a few of our responsibilities.

The students we work with rely on us more than their teachers. I personally work with some very difficult behavioral children at the elementary level and I also have additional CMT training. I have been in some very dangerous predicaments but that is just a day in the life of my everyday job and to educate them can also be a challenge but I would never give up on any of them because I love my job and they need the guidance and they will succeed with our guidance.

We deserve to be paid in a way that reflects the day to day job that we do. Everyone is familiar with the work teachers do in the classroom but Paras are a critical part of that educational process. We should be shown that we make a difference. We are
asked to do much more than what we are paid for and I have myself worked for 15 years as a Para and today I only make $16.18 an hour. I am in full support of House Bill 7224 as it will give clarity to the work that we do every day. Many of you probably don’t even realize the little average a Paraprofessional gets paid yearly. I myself have grossed this past year $23,000 dollars. I am fortunate to have a husband that will help with household income because not everybody is that lucky.

Not to mention that if a Paraprofessional were in need of medical insurance for his or her family they would be paying out of their pocket in addition to what they are being paid biweekly. At least this is true for the district that I work for. Somehow I don’t see that to be fair for people that work so hard for other people’s children and education. We are these students futures. Thank you for your time.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you so much, Ms. Frasca for coming out and thank you Representative McGee for sharing your time with her. As I indicated to Ms. Cinnamon I understand exactly where you’re coming from, my mom was a Paraeducator for a lot of years in Hartford Schools so those stories are very familiar stories to me and so thank you so much for your testimony this afternoon.

REP. MCGEE (5TH): I’ve got to say that Mrs. Hall, your mom, was actually one of the very few adults that I liken to Annie Fisher. She was a Paraprofessional and we loved here dearly.

REP. HALL (7TH): Absolutely. Thank you for coming out this evening. Next we have Gretchen Raffa.
Okay no problem. Next we have Carmen Figueroa. Go right ahead, press the button to the red light.

CARMEN FIGUEROA: Good evening, Representative Hall. I work for a homecare agency so you have listened to a lot of individuals that have spoken about the minimum wage going up, so the fact of.

I’ll start with homecare agencies that opposed, we’re not opposed to an increase in the minimum wage as long as the bill rate that goes with each discipline for the services provided to the clients can be concurrent with the minimum wage going up. Agencies that accept state clients receive no increase to compensate for the wage increase. Private agencies can increase their bill rate but then some individuals will not be able to afford the increased rate. In 2016 the electronic verification visit was implemented by the State of Connecticut creating a need for additional manhours for staff, further education for monitoring and to ensure compliance with no additional monies. The state did give a two percent increase in 2018, the yearly inflation is about 2.1 or 2.2 a year. Unless there is a serious consideration for corresponding state agency rate increase to merit the proposed wage increase agency rate defaults leaving individuals in the community without services. The same applies to agencies of private individuals as they will not be able to afford the increased rate.

Minimum wage increase, I guess its $1.25 a year without a corresponding rate increase, the ripple effect is agencies accepting state cases will not be able to compete with the long-term rates for staff. Private agencies will need to raise rates and seniors will be spending down their money quicker.
and apply for state assistance. The agency will have less money to pay for operating expenses, increased wage rate will increase cost of line of credit, workers’ comp rates are going to increase over time, rates will be increased, agencies will close leaving people without community services, without ADL support individuals will need admission to long-term facilities whose beds are already at a premium. That’s pretty much it.

REP. HALL (7TH): Okay, well thank so much for you for your testimony. So just so I understand, that your particular agency, you are going to oppose an increase in the minimum wage, the issue that you have is that because you receive funding from the State you.

CARMEN FIGUEROA: Well the clients we serve, the majority of them are through the State of Connecticut Allied and you know they have the contracts with each individual access agency pertain to whichever county you’re in. So you know, we deal with five different state agencies.

REP. HALL (7TH): Right, but the money that your client’s receive.

CARMEN FIGUEROA: Not the client’s.

REP. HALL (7TH): The agencies.

CARMEN FIGUEROA: Yes, is billed through Medicaid.

REP. HALL (7TH): The Medicaid funds, so the issue you have is that you would want to see an increase in Medicaid reimbursement so that it can take care of the increase in the minimum wage. So you are not opposed to the increase in the wage, you’re just
concerned that the Medicaid reimbursement wouldn’t be there to facilitate that.

CARMEN FIGUEROA: The last increase before 2018 was April 2015 from the State for the different types of disciplines, there’s a few different disciplines that correspond with the services that are provided to the clients in their homes.

REP. HALL (7TH): So, and I’m not sure how long you’ve been with the agency so when the minimum wage passed in 2011 or 2010 it was increased to $10.10.

CARMEN FIGUEROA: In 2015, it was the first wage increase to get to $10.10, so it was 2015, 2016 and then 2017. I think it went from whatever, I think it was $8.75, to $9.10, to $9.60 to the $10.10.

REP. HALL (7TH): So was there an increase at that time for Medicaid?

CARMEN FIGUEROA: The last time was April 2015.

REP. HALL (7TH): So as a result the vast majority of your workers are $10.10 or are they above that.

CARMEN FIGUEROA: They fall into different categories and they are doing hands-on care they are under a higher rate.

REP. HALL (7TH): So it varies based on the job responsibilities.

CARMEN FIGUEROA: Exactly.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you so much. Any other questions or comments? Thank you so much for coming out. Next we have Kristen Scalley.

KRISTEN SCALLEY: Good evening, my name is Kristen Scalley. I am from Ellington, Connecticut. I work
for the Ellington Board of Ed as a Special Ed Para. I am here for House Bill 7224 about Para pay and I’ve been doing this job for about four years and I love my job.

My duty is to help students getting ready in the morning as in brushing teeth, combing their hair, and learning how to use the bathroom independently, to change school age students diapers, suctioning, taking down data and for seizing. I also teach social and life skills and if anyone here today knows about the rewarding system and how stressful it can be when it comes down to one more trial and we can take a break! Then as for us, support staff, our reward is getting spit at, sworn at, hair pulled, hit, kicked, bit just to name a few just to show how much they appreciate the things we do for them. I just lost it. Actually that is all I have to say and that is the reason why I am here today is that we do need to get more for what we’re doing. It’s not enough just to get by living paycheck to paycheck after four years of doing this.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you so much for coming out this evening. Any questions or comments from the Committee? Thank you. Next we have Dee Sutmeyer. Next we have George Frantzis.

GEORGE FRANTZIS: Good, I guess evening now, Committee thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony. My name is George Frantzis, I am representing Quassy Amusement, I am one of the owners of Quassy Amusement Park which is, I’m the third generation owners of the part. We are celebrating our 110th year of operation.

I have sat here most of the day today and listened to all the testimony and greatly understand and
where the Committee and the State is going with the $15 dollar minimum wage but along those lines, what, I’ve also submitted my testimony so instead of me reading that document I just kinda wanted to chat a little bit about some of the ramifications of the broad stroke statement about the $15 dollar minimum wage and how it should be implemented.

So some of my concerns first of all, if we increase the minimum wage all so quickly is, and there has been talk about it, reducing of staff. I know we have already had meetings about it on how we can combat an increase that would occur. We have also been looking into automation as has been discussed today and some people mentioned that well when minimum wage went up whatever how many years ago, that necessarily didn’t take place. Now there is a product in place that would allow us to substitute some of our first line staff with automation and again it’s not a vehicle we want to take but if forced to, you know, we will start going down that road and I think one of the other things we’re looking at is cutting back on capital improvements and growth within Connecticut.

You know, being here 111 years it’s definitely become much more difficult to maintain. Again, I totally understand the reason and by all means somebody who has a family, definitely could use this increase, I respect that and understand that but my position, I’m a seasonal part-time help employer and I’d like to consider myself truly an educator as much as I am an employer. I teach kids what it’s like to have time management, how to communicate, how to interact with other guests, social skills and a sense of responsibility and then usually 90 percent plus of my staff goes to school during the
off season. I actually have almost a whole new hiring process come mid-August case 90 percent of my staff is off to high school or college. So I think when we start looking at putting this new law, the $15 dollar minimum wage together, I think we just kind of have to look in a broader perspective and the ramifications thereof and keep in consideration, I totally understand. Someone that is healthcare and watching over my grandparents or my mother or my father I think they deserve a little bit more than the kid that I just hired for their first job who’s barely bussing tables. So I think, I understand where we need to go, I understand the working wage for a family but I also think we need to understand these kids need a starting point, a jump-off point. So when you’re putting things together I just would like you to keep those kinds of things in consideration.

REP. HALL (7TH): Are there any questions or comments from the Committee? Representative Polletta.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): Thank you and thank you Mr. Frantzis for being here. About five hours ago, I mentioned how in my district or close to my district was an individual who had reached out to me with some concerns with this Bill and that individual was you. And you know, when I spend time in my district and I go up and down Main Street and I talk to folks like you, I listen to them as do, I’m sure all of my colleagues on the panel and in the building. And there are real concerns with this Bill and no one is disagreeing with the fact that $15 dollars an hour is not enough to sustain yourself or your family in Connecticut, no one is disagreeing with that because, you know what, at the end of the day $15 dollars an hour is barely getting people by. But
the intent of the Bill and what we heard a lot about today was to create a livable wage but there is another side of it. The other side of it is the temporary part-time seasonal work that someone like you provides and as a large employer in my district and having you here, it is of great concern to me that high school kids, college kids that are coming to the park to work in the summer, and it’s not just your park, it’s Lake Compounce, it’s other camps across the State of Connecticut, the YMCAs. These are folks that are working these jobs because they are getting out of the home, they are becoming productive members of society they are leaning on someone like you, that’s their boss to teach them a lot of skills and I know, because as a young DJ I worked at the park for a while and a lot of my peers worked at the park and we valued those jobs. So when I hear a large employer, in my district, close to my district, say that they may consider cutting back on work to you youth because they just simply can’t afford to do business in this matter, it’s concerning to me. So there is two sides to the coin, there is one that says look we need a livable wage for folks and we need to tell they, hey $15 dollars an hour is just the start and we’re gonna increase it every year with the Consumer Price Index and that’ all well and I’m certainly willing to have that conversation. But there is the other side where the business community is not the Walmart’s it’s the small businesses saying, hey we are going to cutback and tighten our belts and that is going to undoubtedly produce less jobs, so I’m not gonna keep going, we have a lot of people and, you know, I appreciate you staying within the time limit.
GEORGE FRANTZIS: Representative Polletta, I would like to add one thing and you kinda touched on it, is and again, I’m a business guy so at the end of the day it is what it is, but one of the things you touched on was these summer camps that will also directly affect people that need this increase in the minimum wage because they rely on these afterschool programs, last time the minimum wage went up, just FYI, those programs were diminished because they budget’s the groups that run those programs the YMCA, the Park and Recs, whatever non-profit groups that run these afterschool programs for intercity youth or whatever have you, they could not afford the increase in the minimum wage to hire these young kids that were seasonal part-time to run those afterschool programs. So again business aside, we saw a lot of groups cancelling trips, closing up shop because they could not afford to hire or their budget couldn’t afford. So there is a broad stroke when we say let’s just increase the minimum wage and again I’m just taking that, you know, take everything into consideration. Look at the big picture when implementing whatever you’re going to implement and that’s kinda why I’m here today again, not to say necessarily no, but to really look at this from all perspectives and make it palatable for everybody. I’d like to see this spread out a little bit, maybe instead of having it frontloaded have it backloaded so it is a little more easy to palate and work with and maybe not have to get rid of this, cause at the end of the day for me it’s all about customer service and teaching. I enjoy teaching kids, I enjoy the interactions with the kids but I also have to run a business and I run it I think soundly for 111 years, we didn’t do that by accident, it’s by seeing where the hurdles are
and dealing with it which is kind of irrelevant here but not meaning the State but it’s not part of the conversation.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): So again I think hearing your perspective on this is important and of course I can speak for my colleagues here that we are respective of both sides of this argument, I mean we’ve sat here and listened to, you know, tens of people that are for this Bill and we certainly owe them the time and the rest of the folks that are here the rest of the night but we also have to be respective of those that have issues and deep concerns with the drastic increase in over a three-year period as one of the Bills calls for which I assume, I mean I’m not gonna speak for your right now, but I am going to say that an increase that quickly doesn’t give enough, I’m assuming here, predictability to a small business to adjust their prices, to adjust their staff, to figure out whether they are going to lay people off or whether they are going to raise prices across the board which is really the only two options or eat the costs.

GEORGE FRANTZIS: It’s all part of the equation.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): It’s all part of the equation and so, you know, there has to be some sort of happy median here. I appreciate you saying spread it out over time. I have heard that, people have said let’s not jump the run, let’s not put the cart before the horse, let’s look at some solution that the small business community, the mom and pop stores along Main Street can get behind, so I thank you for bringing that perspective today and back to you, Representative Hall.
REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you. Are there any other questions? Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you for coming forward and testifying today. You’re not too far from where I live and I have had the pleasure of being at your amusement park, my daughter’s best friend got married there.

GEORGE FRANTZIS: I hope they had a good time.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): It was pretty fun.

GEORGE FRANTZIS: I hope they’re still married.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): They are, [Laughter] they have a wonderful marriage and they have a lot of kids, they’re great and they are a wonderful family. They live actually close to you now than when she was growing up. But I am concerned about your testimony. One of the things that I think is difficult for our State is that we have fallen behind at $10.10 an hour and so we now that people who have been kind of stuck there for a long time and they see prices going up and the cost of living going up and they are not keeping pace. And so I think that is really one of the large, one of the very strong reasons why we’re trying to really uplift people and bring them up to a decent living wage and we’ve heard a lot of testimony and Representative Polletta and I agree that a $15 dollar minimum wage isn’t a living wage but it would really help out a lot of people. So I guess I’m curious whether in terms of your business and what you’ve seen over the years, have you seen families struggling, have you seen kids struggling to make it?
GEORGE FRANTZIS: You know, a very good question because we deal with a lot of very eclectic clientele from Greenwich to Bridgeport to Waterbury, New Haven and everywhere so do I see it? By business is so diverse on how I deal with things be it camps or schools, certain times I see the struggle with the camps, then sometimes I see the struggle with corporate outings and corporate functions and the, you know, I see usually the family element that walk in, apportionment is pretty stable and way is it stable, cause I think if you look back in time, all the way back to the depression, the one thing that people had to do is go out as a family so what were the things that thrived during the depression and back in the day? It was the boardwalks, it was family entertainment. So where am I going with this, that is the consistent. I think one of the things we model ourselves after, if you’re asking me specifically, is that we are affordable. We try to keep our prices low so that we can accommodate a young family and a middle lower income families, that’s our market, that’s who we really try to entertain. So pricing is key to us and keeping that price down. Obviously if the minimum wage goes up and all the costs of doing business go up because I guarantee you if minimum wage goes up trucking is going to go up and we had a ton of unions walking in here today and they are all pushing for the minimum wage increase and why because we all know that if everything else is going to go up exponentially so in turn, your groceries are gonna go up and I think there is a good friend of mine that is going to be on fairly shortly that is going to tell you the same story but we are all going to see it across the board. So at what point do you pass that cost on to the final
consumer. And you know, you’ve got to test those thresholds but at the end of the day we may not be as affordable as we once were and that is not a road I want to go down, I’d love to do it gradually so it is less of an impact, you know, so I don’t want to increase my pricing by two - three dollars in one year, I think that would be a tuff nut to carry for anybody. But, you know.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Well I do appreciate that. I think what you said about the affordability of your park is very attractive to our community and I think that is why stay-vacations for a lot of people are a reality. People don’t have the money to go away and they stay and they do things like going to your park and I think that’s great. But I would say that I believe the cost of living has outpaced the wage in our State and that the minimum wage people who have been at the minimum wage have seen prices go up and costs go up far more than their wages have gone up and so, you know, I think our goal in raising the minimum wage is that people will have more money and be able to go to your park because they have a little bit more money in their pocket. So I don’t think there is a real conflict here, I think that, you know, I feel optimistic that we are going to be able to raise the minimum wage and in doing so, you know, I hope to see your business thriving as well.

GEORGE FRANTZIS: And I agree with you. I do see the minimum wage increasing and again I’m not saying it shouldn’t happen what I am asking is that we just look at how we go about it, can there be some exemptions, there has been talk of the training hours, there has been talk of seasonal part-time, so it is palatable for both side of the community, you
know, the person trying to sustain a family and add to the family income and then there is the college or high school kid who’s just trying to make a few bucks before he goes back to school and that’s primarily who I rely on, and again I’m just looking asking the Committee’s to look at this with a broad vision opposed to $15 dollars its got to be here, it’s got to be quick and fast. I get that.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): There are two things you just mentioned that remind me, one is that we did have some testimony earlier today and someone cited a Statute that talks about an exemption for seasonal workers, are you aware of that?

GEORGE FRANTZIS: I think that might have been a false statement in that what she was dictating because believe me it raised an eyebrow really fast and so God bless Google, you know, I quickly started looking up the numbers that she was talking about and there is really nothing that refers to our industry and/or I think to answer your question quickly and easily, it didn’t refer to anything we could hang our hat on. I got to think I would have know about it well in advance of that before so that is why I was very surprised but yeah there wasn’t much that.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): That’s why I asked you and I think we’re all gonna look at that and see and check-in with the folks that do know the answers to those questions see where it stands. I’m sure she believes that it exists. I’m sure she didn’t just make that up.

GEORGE FRANTZIS: No there are, there’s verbiage on that statement, that statute but it doesn’t, it wouldn’t affect me.
SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): And the other question I have is about the training wage you mentioned. We’ve had some disagreement amongst Committee members and amongst folks who have testified about the degree to which training takes place and you’ve talked about some of the kids who come in and are working for the summer. The training that goes into training someone to bus tables would you say, how long would it take to train somebody to do that job.

GEORGE FRANTZIS: That’s a very good question. I think there are different skill sets that are needed at our business. I’m gonna be quite candid training never ends. As I said earlier we spend a lot of time on customer service training and then there is the technical side so, yes I mean at some point you are on your own but it never stops as far as I’m concerned. But so to put it in a quantified you’re gonna be training for 20 hours, you know some of it’s about a day, day and a half of hardcore technical stuff but the customer service and the dealing with you know, multitasking, life skills endless.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I would imagine some people come in and are really good on the first day in terms of customer service and life skills and some people juggle a little more with that in every occupation but I was referring to the hardcore real on the technical, how to perfect your job and make sure that you are adequately meeting the obligations of the job criteria, so I think that is what most people are thinking about when they talk about training. But thank you, I have no further questions.

REP. HALL (7TH): Senator Miner.
SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So one of the Bills that I’d be curious what your opinion might be is Senate Bill 764 which is the shift-scheduling Bill and maybe I’ll leave it right there [Laughter] and I’m not looking to prolong this evening for anybody including yourself but did you include that, did you send us anything in writing and if you did.

GEORGE FRANTZIS: You know, I did not address that particular topic at this time, I honestly thought this was primarily about the minimum wage but if were are going to address it, that Bill actually scare me more than any. To think that if I have a rainy week that I’ve got to pay staff, implementing this thing would be a logistic nightmare. I don’t know even where to begin. So yeah, that one that is a scary Bill.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Through you, Mr. Chairman. If you would maybe take a look at that and make some specific comments, I would certainly be happy to read through that testimony as well. I don’t think there is any legal impediment to you submitting that even tomorrow to the Committee for its consideration.

GEORGE FRANTZIS: I will get it to as soon as I possibly can. Thank you for bring it up.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. HALL (7TH): Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Sorry, but I’m not going to prolong it either but I think that is one of those issue where there are real needs on the part of workers to know their schedule and to know it in advance and, you know how we go about that, I’ve
been in a position where I’ve worked with a business that had a ebb and flow and needed to be able to reduce work force fairly quickly and we’ve got ways to negotiate to make sure that the business needs were addressed but also that workers had some predictability and had some assurance that they weren’t gonna be forced into a situation where it was just not possible for them to take a second job or to deal with child care or to finish their education, you know, those are the real life situation that I’m sure you’ve had to address and a lot of employers will do that, will make accommodations that really work for people but they may be the exception. Were looking to create a system that will work for everybody. So I know I will be interested in seeing your testimony as well and I know we are going to be hearing from some other people on that issue tonight so hopefully we will get some more clarity on it. Thank you.

GEORGE FRANTZIS: Thank you, I will send something you can use as soon as I can. Thank you for your time.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you for coming up this evening, I appreciate it. Sherry Cutler.

SHERRY CUTLER: Good evening, my name is Sherry Cutler. I work in the Groton School System as a Para for the last 18 years. I am here to support the House Bill 7224 AN ACT CONCERING PARAEDUCATOR PAY EQUITY.

Let me start by saying this is not something that I would ever see myself doing. Public speaking is way outside my comfort zone but I feel a sense of urgency to address this issue and explain a little more about what we do.
Over the years my job has changed from coping and laminating and reading with the students that need extra help to supporting small groups of students reteaching subject matter. As Paras we’re also expected to come proficient in new teaching methods. In 2015 Paras in our town were given a one-time opportunity to collect our experience and submit a letter with hope of a step-increase. At that time I had 15 years of experience. It included working in self-contained classroom, inclusion classrooms with speech pathologist, special ed teachers and classroom teachers. I worked with medically fragile students, students with anger issues, social issues, nonverbal students and students with learning disabilities. I had worked in elementary, pre-school and middle school levels. And I was told that I did not qualify for any such increase. They said that Groton gave me all my training therefore they owned by experience.

I continue to make $13.61 an hour. After 18 years of dedication I make 26 cents more an hour than the starting rate in our district. Obviously it is impossible to support a family on our wages. We have six Paras that work out of our room, three are single mothers that have to work two jobs year around to make ends meet. Another Para in our building is working just to have health insurance and that payment absorbs her entire paycheck. This year I have taken on the job of secretary in our union. We employ roughly 190 Paras in the two of Groton and the six months since school started 31 Paras have quit. That is 16 percent in 6 months. I feel that if we were paid a more competitive salary we could retain quality employees. The services provide in our public schools could not be achieved
without us. This job comes with extra responsibilities that we should be compensated for. The high turnover rate disrupts student learning and strains the teachers not to mention the money that is wasted on training new staff.

Let me ask you this, would you work a job that has no chance for advancement and no job description except to “assist the teacher.” Having your commitment to adequate service for our most vulnerable students relate to the people providing these service. I ask that you support this Bill. It is critical for all of the Paras and the amazing students that we serve. Please acknowledge the passion we have for our jobs, the compassion we have with our students and support us with the compensation we deserve. Thank you for your time and this opportunity.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you Sherry for coming out this afternoon, this evening. Any questions or comments from the Committee? Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Oh please sit down for a minute.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I’m pretty shocked by your comment that you’ve been there 18 years and you are making 26 cents more than the starting wage and that just blows me away. I feel like that is unacceptable. I think our country is a little screwed up when we have people like you who are so dedicated to the kids and I know that’s the only reason you do this, I’m sure because I imagine there are other jobs you could go out and get that would pay you more money.
SHERRY CULTER: And that’s how we lose a lot of our people.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): And I’ve heard that before. I know that the Paraeducators Bill is incredibly important, this is a group of people that have been overlooked in your essential to having good schools and so, but I think that what you just said really got my attention and I’m sure everybody in the room. No matter how you feel about this, this is something that needs to be fixed and, you know, it’s interesting that you are here testifying the same day as the minimum wage increase, that is obviously something that would help Paras and when you talk about the work that is done by Paraeducators for the amount of money they make it really helps put in perspective how important it is to raise the minimum wage as well. Thank you.

REP. HALL (7TH): Any other questions or comments from the Committee? Thank you for coming out this afternoon. [Applause] Carols Moreno.

CARLOS MORENO: Good afternoon Senator Kushner, Senator Miner, Representative Hall, thank you for allowing us the opportunity today to testify in support of various important Bills. We have submitted testimony that raises attention to a lot of those bills but I would like to read some brief points about a few of those here today.

We stand in support of SB 764 AN ACT PROHIBITING "ON-CALL" SHIFT SCHEDULING and the two minimum wage Bills SB 2 and HB 5004 and the Uber-Lyft Bill SB 989.

On the scheduling Bill I would like to briefly point out that the Bill actually seeks to limit the
practice of on-call scheduling, not totally prohibit it as the title of the Bill suggests and that is reflected in the actual language in the Bill. It is worth noting, however, that the practice has been outlawed already in many places, most recently Philadelphia as of a couple of months, as of December 2018.

The aim of this Bill is basically, it’s a basic labor standard, is to protect hourly workers in low-wage retail, food service and hospitality jobs from last-minute shift cancellations. When shifts are abruptly cancelled families lose income that they rely on. The bill would require employers to fairly compensate employees when their time is wasted as a result of cancelled shifts. Several major retailers have already discontinued this practice amid recent state probes by Attorneys General in New York, Connecticut and elsewhere. Rather than risk litigation they opted for fair scheduling practices and in doing so actually proved that on-call scheduling is not a business necessity. Some of those companies are here today, they are well known, they are going strong, Aeropostale, Carter’s, David’s T, Walton and Company, Pacific Sun Wear California and Zumiez.

Fair scheduling is actually a better way to do business and there is research that actually prove that for both employers and employees alike. Recently the retail giant Gap, working with leading academic researchers in Berkley launched a pilot program in 2015 that offered more predictable and flexible work hours for hourly employees.

Briefly the study included 28 stores in San Francisco and Chicago, 19 of those stores are
randomly assigned a treatment condition and nine of those stores are randomly assigned a control. The pilot both the treatment and control stores continue to implement two week advance notices, not 72 hours as this Bill, but two weeks and full elimination of on-calls with the rest of the company stores. The study showed that the increase in the stability of the work schedule is possible and even profitable in today’s competitive retail environment. Among those stores stable scheduling actually increased median sales by seven percent with those new conditions in the store. The reason why they had previously been using too many part-time and temporary employees and it found that it actually lead to lower sales and higher costs. Simply put the stable scheduling practices actually allowed sales associates to achieve a level of mastery in their positions that enabled them to become better at this jobs and it showed in their sales.

And really quick on the minimum wage Bills, there was a recent report by the United Way, the ALICE report which demonstrated some really startling results. It really showed that Connecticut is in a state of emergency. To put it briefly 40 percent of households in Connecticut are what is consider ALICE and these are folks that struggle to pay bills, folks that can’t put food on the table or struggle to put food on the table and that’s really a dire situation for Connecticut. To put it brief perspective in Danbury 50 percent of those households are ALICE. In Hartford 70 percent of those households are ALICE and then Bridgeport 72 percent, that’s 72 percent of households that can’t actually afford to pay the bill and are probably one paycheck away from poverty or actually living in
poverty. That is a state of emergency I think in our state. It really, is in startling contrast to actually what is happening just 30 miles down the road from Bridgeport in a place like Greenwich which has the highest concentration of millionaires in our country. So we’ve heard all this before. Connecticut has the dubious distinction of having the highest income inequality in the nation and I just want to make know that, raising the minimum wage isn’t gonna reverse income inequality in our state. That is gonna require far more in depth structural changes to our tax policy but what raising the minimum wage will do is that it is an important antipoverty tool and it’s gonna help address the conditions of the 40 percent of the households in Connecticut that are struggling to put food on the table right now. That is startling to me, so I hope the Committee will take that into consideration as it reviews the merits of this Bill and we urge the Committee to vote in favor of the minimum wage Bills and really take this into account. Thank you so much.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you, Mr. Moreno for coming out this afternoon/evening. Any questions or comments for Mr. Moreno? Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Carlos, I’ve heard you speak before and sometimes you get ahead of me because you speak fast and it’s good because you get a lot in, but I wondered if you could go over those ALICE figures again for the cities particularly. I’ve heard them before but I would like to jot them down for Danbury for instance.

CARLOS MORENO: Sure so the report actually covered seven or eight cities, I don’t have the stats in my
head, the three most severe are the three that I mentioned in your district the City of Danbury 50 percent of those households are ALICE, that is asset limited income constrained yet employed. In the City of Hartford that’s 70 percent and in Bridgeport 72 percent.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): It’s amazing that is happening in our State and I appreciate what you said about income inequality not being, that this isn’t gonna fix income inequality but, you know, it really will help a large group of people in our State, a lot of working people. I also was interested, you mentioned that some of these corporations have decided to voluntarily change their scheduling methodology because of investigative probes. Could you tell us a little bit more about what, what have they been faced with?

CARLOS MORENO: So in 2015 Eric Schneiderman the Attorney General, the former Attorney General in New York and Attorney Jepsen here in Connecticut were responding to, I believe it was several complaints and organizations that had raised this to the attention to these attorneys general of what has happening in corporations, folks that were being, having cancelled shift at the last minute and they decided to I think put together a class action lawsuit against several of these stores and rather than risk litigation and the cost associated with litigation they just decided to change the scheduling practice quite simply. Some of the stores I believe incorporated scheduling software that exists out there that can predict the level of traffic that is going to come into the door and will, you know, let you know how many folks you should schedule on a certain day, you know,
depending on what time of the season it is in the year or previous sales and so forth and other stores just decided to just schedule everybody’s hours in advance by two weeks but made a specific commitment to not schedule too many part-time employees but to have the folks actually come in much more closer on a fulltime basis and it showed that actual, that level of consistency actually developed mastery in their positions as sales associates which lead to higher sales by I think a figure of seven percent. So, that is something that I think other stores like Abercrombie & Fitch right now are considering as well and, you know, having actually worked in restaurants myself, I’ve worked, you know, when I was younger, I worked in restaurants as a server and sometimes as a bartender as well, there were a lot of restaurants that at the time incorporated the practice of on-call scheduling and some that didn’t. I found that the ones that didn’t I actually made the most amount of money in tips and were more consistent in general and had more traffic coming in through the door, had a higher level of service at the tables as opposed to the ones that actually incorporated these practices which tended to have much more, you know, higher turnover, didn’t have as much employee retention and I think, you know, sales suffered for it because the quality of service at the tables was lacking. So, you know I come at this from a very personal place as well as. Last thing I’d like to say about that is that I grew up, my grandparents raised me as an only child, my grandmother worked in kitchens in fast food restaurants and also worked as a domestic worker and I remember her taking me many of these establishments when she was working and I saw how hard she struggled and I can actually remember as
being as little as five or six years old, you know, talking to my grandma saying, “no they cancelled my shift I’m not gonna come into work today.” So this comes and, you know I saw the struggle she was going to put food on the table before me as a child and it’s really what motivates me to work in this work that we’re doing here today and, you know, being a resident of Connecticut for the last three years, I’m fairly new to this state, it’s startling, you know, what’s happening right now with these industries. I think that this practice is running rampant. I’ve only seen it grown from the organizing that we do in the field, the workers that we talk to, you know, when we’ve tried to organize in places like Walmart for example, a lot of those folks are scared to come forward but I understand that is actually become the norm, it is not the exception, it’s the norm in retail stores right now and something really has to be done.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): So, I’m glad you brought Walmart because that is a good example of a store that or a corporation that we all know is a very, very profitable and the family that owns that business has become incredibly wealthy, so there is great wealth associated in that business and yet they continue practices like, scheduling practices that you’re talking about that really are hard on working people. And I know of the things that is in this Bill that I wondered if you could talk about a little bit more is something a term that I heard for the first time “clopening”, could you talk about that?

CARLOS MORENO: Yeah, absolutely. Thank you. Clopening is basically a combination of the words closing and opening. What it refers to, for example
in restaurants you might be working a late shift where you get out in one or two in the morning and then you might be scheduled the very next day to come in for a breakfast shift or a brunch shift and you are required to come in at say eight or nine in the morning so you have little rest in between shifts so the protection there really is to disincentivize businesses from incorporating that practice because it really poses a risk to someone’s health. It’s dangerous, folks are tired after working, you know 12 hours, getting out at two in the morning, having to get on public transit for example like I did in New York City at the time, getting on public transit, traveling home for about an hour on the train, only to have a few hours sleep and turn around and get back to work in the morning, that is quite frankly dangerous and that’s what the Bill seeks to address, protect workers. It gives workers the option to decline without retaliation and keep their jobs safe so it’s a measure of job protection but also should the employee what to work those hours for whatever reason, it also allows him or her to want to do that. But it obligates business to pay time and a half for any hours that are worked within that 11 hour window between shifts. And again, that really is meant as a measure to stop the practice and disincentivize businesses from incorporating that because we don’t want that to happen because we want to keep workers safe.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. And I want to go back for a moment to delusions and, you know, certainly having a Statue like this would be, it would help move the ball in the right direction but I wish you could talk a little bit about what the
solution is. What I hear you saying is more fulltime work, that most people would appreciate because most people are looking for fulltime work and also probably have more workers or, you know, I know sometimes I get very frustrated I go into a store and it’s a really profitable business and I cannot find a salesclerk to help me with something I’m looking for and I bet most of us in the room have had that problem and it feels a lot like some of these corporations are making a ton of money but they are not employing very many people to actually provide the kind of service, yet I still go back to that store because in my neighborhood it’s the only place I can go to find the product and so, I wonder if those are the kinds of things that you experience in the organizing that you’ve done.

CARLOS MORENO: And the organizing that we’ve done, the typical experiences we found were folks are they are under-scheduled and when folks work on-call those shifts are usually cancelled actually, folks will actually report to a shift and then they are told that they should go home after reporting to work because they, because the traf, for whatever reason the business, the sales aren’t what was expected for that day, so, you know, it creates a lot of irregularity, a lot of instability and a family’s finances and that is a very destabilizing effect for a family especially when folks are counting on those shifts. They know they’re gonna work on Friday so they arranged childcare and then they had that shift cancelled after reporting to work on a Friday so now they are on the hook for paying for childcare which is exuberantly expensive as very body knows plus the money that they actually lost in that shift. So, you know, you asked about
solutions, you know, one of the solutions that folks actually incorporate in the study is that, you know, there’s a whole industry that creates software that kind of predicts what traffic is going to be as it come into the door. You know, those are a set of solutions that some of these stores have actually implemented and have actually worked out for them so I would point to that. But, you know, I think there is also a tendency in these industries to hire more folks but employ them part-time and to keep them, and for the folks that even work fulltime make sure that they don’t work over 35 hours a week because they don’t want to pay them time and a half so they intentionally suppressing wages as much as possible and over hiring so they have as many people to pick from and that quite frankly is abusive because they get to, you know, schedule folks left and right for on-call shift maybe four-five times a week and then they end up cancelling maybe a third of those and actually giving folks and giving the other two but didn’t actually work those shifts. So I think it’s actually, you know tantamount to playing with people’s livelihoods, they could be a little more responsible in these practices by, you know, reducing the amount of people they are hiring but giving them more hours and, you know, I think that would have a better effect because a lot of folks that are working part-time, you know, they’re workin two-three part-time jobs, right, so using that example again of a person that was relying on that Friday shift and had to cancel last minute is now on the hook for childcare and has lost the income from that one job well they also denied a shift at that second job that would have allowed them to, to make up that money. So, you know, the losses are exponential and when folks are living on the brink
of poverty, working $10.10 an hour, for $10.10 an hour, it could potentially be devastating.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I think, you know, it’s completely unrestricted scheduling is something that’s usually problematic and if we can do better with scheduling I think we will see some real improvement in the way people work and the way people live in Connecticut. And I know some of these things are new to us and so we kinda think, oh you can’t do that, it’s never been done here before but I think that’s how change comes about it we find out we can do it and it works. And so I am looking forward to further discussion on this Bill.

CARLOS MORENO: Thank you so much, and if I may I have just one quick point, I’m sorry. Go ahead Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): I didn’t know if you wanted to finish your thought.

CARLOS MORENO: Actually it was relating to something you might pick-up. I wanted to mention that, you know, the Bill itself, the language in the Bill, we often hear in this building folks want to know did we consult small businesses, did we consult, you know, representatives of the businesses in the community and I what to say that we did with this particular Bill and a lot of that came from conversations that you and I had Senator Miner when discussing this Bill last year and, you know, there has been some commentary about the severe weather conditions clause which is something that was not in that Bill and previous versions until we had a conversation with Senator Miner and he raised, you know, these issues, right, and they seem valid to us, right, so we, you know, are reasonable. You
know, I think folks on the other side are reasonable and they want to make sure that this is gonna be a Bill that is going to reduce any negative impact on small businesses as much as possible and that is why, you know, the Bill language was crafted very carefully to, to allow exemptions for small businesses in the cases of severe weather conditions, also the Bill would apply to businesses that employed 25 employees or more so that was actually crafted with small businesses in mind. So I want to point those two things out because, you know, it’s really, the Bill is really geared toward helping the majority of folks that work in big box stores that are really abusing these practices. And I know that there is, you know, improvement that could probably be made to the severe weather conditions clause and that is a conversation that I think would be welcomed and when its needed.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman. And I thank you for your comments. So, what I am trying to imagine is how we fit everything into this box and it seems based on the comments that you and others have made that there probably are circumstances where it would be much easier to craft some language that would define the parameters under which you could tell someone their service wouldn’t be needed that day or gee, we really could use some help. Wouldn’t it be easier if we didn’t try to include everything? And so the gentleman that was here earlier that had represented the amusement park, I think of other outdoor activities whether it is a lifeguard of whether it is lawn maintenance businesses, it doesn’t take a severe weather event to significantly change the likelihood of a work schedule and so that is reason why I’m wondering
isn’t it, would it make any sense to take a look at some of those larger employee situations where I think you could reasonably sit across the table from someone and say, look it, you got it anytime here, you got 45 people in this building, before you let somebody go or before you require somebody to come in, why don’t you try living with this for a while. But it seems like this attempts to capture almost everything.

CARLOS MORENO: I respectfully disagree. I don’t think it does. I, you know, I understand the concerns. I would say two things. The State of Oregon has passed this legislation, several cities have already passed this legislation and it has not doomed businesses. We often find our self, we often find ourselves in Connecticut going, you know, debating the merits of these Bills based on the impacts of small businesses and large businesses such as this and other states are doing this and it is not having a disparitive effect on those businesses. The other thing I would say is 72 hours is really a reasonable time to understand, I think for businesses and I’ve been a former business owner in my past, not, you know, not an amusement park owner or a big box store owner or anything like that, I ran a small communications firm, you, you anyone that has been in the business a long time can reasonably know the level of business that’s gonna come in to the door, you know, three days from now. Most businesses in states with this legislation are providing two weeks advance notice and they are not going bankrupt. So 72 hours is, I think, very fair and again that was implemented in the Bill with small businesses in mind. You know, one last thing that I would say working in restaurant industries
when I was younger, you knew what kind of traffic was gonna come in on a Friday night. You had a reasonable amount of expectation that 100-150 covers were gonna come in and you scheduled accordingly and there was a surety that this businesses took, that restaurants took, to make sure that that business was going to come into the door and they can keep those shifts scheduled. Credit card reservations for parties of four or more, restaurants took credit card reservations, it was a guarantee that they were going to have some income should that party cancel their reservation. So there are practices that businesses can incorporate into their models to protect themselves from, you know, from volatile consumer sales for example. You know, scheduling software is one of those, the practice I just mentioned is another, so I would, you know, I respect what you’re saying Senator Miner and I feel like we’ve, you know, the proponents of this Bill have incorporated the suggestions of, I’m sorry, that the proponents of the Bill have incorporated the suggestion of the business community as much as possible here and I think it is a fair Bill.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): So to you Madam Chair. I’m going to back to the question I asked. Does the Bill include lawncare maintenance?

CARLOS MORENO: No, the Bill does not. The Bill covers.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): So no one that works for a lawncare company or an arborist or anyone that may lay down fertilizers or anything like that, this, I can assure them that this does not affect them?

CARLOS MORENO: Those industries are not covered under this Bill, there is only three industries, oh,
SENATOR MINER (30TH): And through you, Madam Chairman. Does this include grocery stores?

CARLOS MORENO: No. It does not include, I don’t, I may be wrong on that, you would have to check the language of the Bill, to the best of my knowledge it does not. It is really meant to cover restaurants.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): And lastly I do appreciate the fact that we’ve had conversation about this, I enjoyed spending the evening that one time in Torrington watching the movie as well, so with regard to severe weather conditions as an advocate I think you’ve heard the testimony, a little bit of it so far with regard to the restaurant industry, is it conceivable that something less than a severe weather event could pose a significant downturn in someone’s business for which some relief in that arena might not be a bad idea?

CARLOS MORENO: The question seem broad, could you make it a little more specific, perhaps an example?

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Certainly, so I get up in the morning and I watch the weather and the weather says chance of showers and yet if I get home from here and it’s dinnertime or a little before dinnertime a couple of the restaurants, whether it’s the West Street Grill or a couple of others have outdoor dining. West Street doesn’t have a lot of room, some of the others have a lot more room, but there could be, you know, a wind worry, there could be some rain, there could be anything that I would not classify as severe weather condition yet the significance of that event or the potential for that
event could be significant. So, you know, or maybe I should say could be severe. And so there is just no reason to have those people, all of those people, standing around not having earnings potential that you would hope they would have. So that is my question. My question is even within those that are, if you’re right, the limited number that are in this Bill, would you be opposed to reexamining the severe weather conditions potion to provide some relief as I’ve identified?

CARLOS MORENO: I would never be opposed to reexamining and vetting a Bill as much as possible to make sure that both parties are protected. I do have to say though that using that particular example of business for example that relies on or that has a certain amount of covers for outdoor seating on a particular night and has to, has to and while there might be a case when there might be rain in the forecast for that day for example and has to move everybody indoors and discontinue the outdoor seating for the remainder of the evening, I mean not to put it,[chuckles]. I don’t want to be flippant but businesses can do thing to ensure that they can still maintain outdoor table service. You can screen in the outdoor dining section, you can put, you know, awnings over it. I’ve worked in restaurants like that. I think that if there are certain wind gusts for example that make it untenable to sit outside, then that is something that could probably be legislated in the Bill. I think that whatever administrative agency would conduct this would probably have a process for that. You know, some sort of notification, either a governor’s notice that would go out saying, you know, employees are not required to report to work
today because of X, Y and Z weather conditions that could possible follow that or it could set whatever conditions that it determines but, I think that the more the more dire emergency right now that is happening with workers who are on the cusp of poverty or relying on these shifts and are at a much more dire financial state than an employer might be and really need to have a measure of stability for something that is really responsible scheduling practice that a lot of other restaurants have already incorporated in other states and cities.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): I do appreciate your comments and your thoughtfulness and I do look forward to continuing the conversation to see if we can find something that is perhaps a little more workable. Thank you.

CARLOS MORENO: As do I, thank you, Senator Miner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Representative Polletta.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): Good evening. Thanks for being here and your patience throughout the day. So I have a few brief questions. I’m more concerned about the restaurant portion. My district is comprised of, if you’ve ever been to Watertown and you come up and down the main road, there is a lot of restaurants there. Most of them are locally owned. And, you know, this will undoubtedly affect restaurant owners, I mean across the State of Connecticut because the experience I’ve had talking to them throughout my campaign and whatnot and just throughout my youth, there are a lot of instances in which they need to call individuals in last minute. So what would happen if let’s say, a restaurant owner that has a small banquet hall next to it has a bereavement. Would that then constitute under this
law a violation if they needed to call in 10 people to serve say 65 folks that are coming to a bereavement from a funeral?

CARLOS MORENO: So can you clarify, I mean a bereavement presumably would be scheduled in advance if it’s not a last minute?

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): Not necessarily. Have you ever been to a bereavement before?

CARLOS MORENO: I don’t know, maybe I have not. [Laughter]

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): Well there are things called untimely deaths.

CARLOS MORENO: Yes, I understand.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): And the funeral may be within a day and then they have a bereavement right after the funeral, so what would happen in that situation?

CARLOS MORENO: So, if you mean. So this would be a restaurant that has a banquet hall and is renting out that space.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): No, through you. It would be a restaurant that has a room, if you want to call it a banquet room, okay, that seats 75 people, you come up and down my Main Street, I can show you four or five of ‘em, that could accommodate small and I don’t want to call this a party, small gatherings, and some of which are booked, in this situation as a bereavement last minute.

CARLOS MORENO: Okay, so how many employees are in this said restaurant?
REP. POLLETTA (68TH): I mean I have no idea. I mean how many employees can work in a restaurant that has a room for gatherings, plus a bar plus a restaurant, they may have more than 25, they may have 15, they may have 30, I mean any given day it could vary. And also as follow up question has the Connecticut Restaurant Association or the Food Association have they been consulted on this Bill to see what their thoughts are.

CARLOS MORENO: Not to my knowledge.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): So, if we are going to craft legislation that directly affects these employers, should we not at least have them in the room and say, hey, these are legitimate concerns of ours that could adversely affect our business.

CARLOS MORENO: We have met with Representatives, legislators who represent their interests which is where we’ve gotten that feedback from. To put it frankly in our experience, it has always been a strategic misstep to engage with these organizations in the past when crafting this language because they usually reach an impasse so, no we have not consulted them.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): So, getting.

CARLOS MORENO: So, I’m sorry but we have directly engaged with small businesses on other Bills for example such as paid family medical leave and that is something that we can probably do with a fair workweek legislation as well. I think that, you know, if you take a look at a Bill like paid family medical leave over 100 businesses have signed on to the coalition in support of paid leave and I would venture to guess that a lot of them would probably
also be supportive of his legislation and it’s something that I would be happy endeavor in brief you on in later days.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): So, I think the beginning of your testimony you talked briefly about the big box stores having this issue. Would you, in your opinion and your experience, you probably have more experience in this than me, would you agree that it is probably more prevalent to target a big box store with this piece of legislation than the small restaurant owner along Main Street?

CARLOS MORENO: Well that is what the Bill is trying to do. It is trying to target the large big box store because that is why the employee threshold is set at 25 plus and why specific industries have been targeted.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): So, 25 plus you would consider obviously a big box store but you wouldn’t consider a restaurant as employing 25 people?

CARLOS MORENO: I’ve worked in restaurants that, most restaurants are under 25 folks, small business restaurants. I’ve never worked in a chain restaurant for example. They may have more employees and that would be exactly the kind of restaurant that this Bill would target.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): So would you be willing to work on language in this Bill that excluded or worked in a way that would help a restaurant that has a gathering room for events such as a bereavement that might be unexpected in which they are going to need to call individuals in to work.

CARLOS MORENO: Two things, one we work as a coalition so there are many interested parties that
would have to come to the table to discuss it, but I think folks would be open but I would also look to the legislatures who would consider this a priority as well and have vetted this Bill and have deemed it sound.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): Yeah, I again, we always hear here about our districts, you know, my district is very unique. I have a lot of small businesses, hardworking middleclass folks there, many of them came here from Europe in the 60s and 70s like my dad, worked his way up, you know, went to trade school, became and electrician, started his own business, the American Dream. So when we talk about small business owners along Main Street these are all real voices. I mean these are people saying, now you’re gonna penalize me because I need to call someone in for a bereavement. I have real concern with that, so I do understand that if there is Walmart of the world that makes an individual travel 25 minutes, pay the tolls to come in, park the car then get inside, check-in to work and tell them, we don’t need you anymore, that’s unfair. But when a business owner needs someone to come in because they have an ability to not only make, you know, profit for themselves but their workers will be making tips and, you know, will be working three or four hours of that luncheon or what not, I think that is a good thing for our economy. I don’t think we should be penalizing them and telling them, hey we’re gonna slap you with a fine or whatnot if you do this so I think there is some instances here where there’s got to be some compromise where, and again I am homing in here on the restaurants because that is my district, and that is a lot of people across Connecticut, that will be hurt by this. So, thank
you for your perspective and I hope we can work on some compromise language. Thank you.

CARLOS MORENO: If I can only mention one thing, you know, in reference to the instance which you brought up which is a valid situation I would say, we shouldn’t let the perfect get in the way of the good. I think we could all poke holes in several pieces of legislation all day when I come to this building, I don’t think, you know, ultimately I think, you know, legislation is passed as perfectly as possible and we make adjustments along the way, so I appreciate your comments and pointing out a very valid situation and I do look forward to working with you on that.

SENATOR Kushner (24TH): Other comments or questions? One moment. Representative Porter.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. I missed most of your testimony, I’m sorry. But I have gathered enough information since sittin here and I just basically want to thank you for bring your perspective and experiences that you’ve had and the work that you’ve done and continue to do to this Bill. I really do appreciate it and its important, just, just the power story and how everyday people are impacted and how it impacts their lives on a very personal and tangible level and I love that you actually gave a suggestion cause I didn’t know about the program or whatever it is you talked about, on-call scheduling.

CARLOS MORENO: Scheduling software.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Right, software. Where they can get this cause I was tryin to think there has to be a way to predict what, right, what the flow of
business will be and I think that all this needs to be taken into consideration from the business aspect as well as the worker aspect because without the worker there is no business and there is no profit. So thank you for all the work, and research and data that you brought to this and for your testimony and your patience because you’ve been here quite a while today, so thank you Carlos.

CARLOS MORENO: Thank you, Representative Porter and everyone on the Labor Committee, appreciate the questions tonight and everyone’s leadership today.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I’m not quite done. I do want to recommend that after this discussion cause, you know, there are legislators that are very concerned about this and want to see something done this session and what I hear from Representative Polletta and before that Senator Miner that there is an interest in a willingness to be open to some of the ideas that are in this Bill, so one of my suggestions would be that we look towards some of the other states and cities and arrange for conversations with the types of businesses that have been raised here that are now adhering to that, those new laws because I think that would help us gain some perspective on it, so hopefully that is something we can arrange for quickly so that we have that perspective as well.

CARLOS MORENO: We can do that, absolutely.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you, so much. Any questions or comments? Okay. Next up Renee Hamel. Is Renee? Renee is here. I said, we almost at the end of the first page. Hello, how are you this evening.
RENEE HAMEL: I am doing well. Good evening, Senator Kushner, Representative Porter and Members of the Committee. My name is Renee Hamel. I live in West Hartford and I am here to support HB 2, SB 2 and HB 5004.

I would like to share a story about my family. My aunt and uncle, they are both people of color and they also live in West Hartford, they also work hourly jobs. They have two teenaged children and they also live in West Hartford. My uncle he works part-time at FedEx. At one time he owned a restaurant and was managing the restaurant but unfortunately he had to sell it because the hours were too long, there wasn’t enough money coming in and when he sold it was at a loss. My aunt, she works as a homecare CNA. She makes $12 dollars an hour and even though she works 60 hours a week she is not eligible for overtime so she makes about $530 dollars a week. Sorry.

I’ve never seen two people that work as hard as my aunt and my uncle for their kids. I remember last Thanksgiving we went around the table and we shared the things that we were most thankful for and my cousin he said that it was his education cause even at 14 years old he knows how much his parents have sacrificed for him to give him something that my aunt and uncle are not able to have. My cousin, she is 17 and she recently had to pickup a job in order to pay for her clothing and some of her personal expenses because my aunt and uncle are not able to pay that for her and so I appreciate what you said earlier Representative Porter about how no matter what age you are, whether you are young or old, if you are working the same job you should be able to get the same pay because I think that would really
help families like mine that are struggling to get by.

I think it is an absolute shame that people who have jobs and are working have to worry about affording their basic needs to survive, even with the amount of hours that my aunt and uncle work they still had to sign up for food stamps. That extra three dollars an hour that my aunt would make would be tremendous for a family like mine that has to watch every penny it spends. They will have more money to cover their expenses which help alleviate the stress and anxiety of having to make ends meet. I know that many people today share about how all the jobs they have, after you pay all your expenses and your bills, there’s not much money left over. The extra money will allow my family more disposable income which was said before, which would go directly into the local economy and businesses and help to grow sales tax base.

People of color have become increasingly overrepresented in low-wage work. According to a State of Work in Connecticut by the Connecticut Voices for Children, in 2016 workers of color constituted 30 percent of Connecticut’s overall workforce but 60 percent of low-wage workers. We must act in order to close these widening disparities. We have an obligation to not leave families with children behind. From my experience in the field of social work people want to work, they want to have respect on the job and be self-sufficient. So I think we should do the right thing by raising the minimum wage to $15 dollars and demonstrate as a state that all work has dignity and should be treated so through fair compensation that provides more than mere survival but the opportunity to thrive. So
thank you for the opportunity for me to testify today.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you and I really appreciate what you said about your family and how hard they work and, you know, it makes me feel good that we’re in a position to really address some of these issues and really help people in a very direct and immediate way. So I appreciate your testimony. Any comments or questions? Representative Porter.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Hey, Renee. First of all great job. I know this is your first time testifying at a Public Hearing, just want to let you know you did a great job.

RENEE HAMEL: Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You struck accord, got a little emotional with you because it’s personal. I know it, I’ve experienced it. It hits home for me. And what’s really disturbin is the fact that you can work 60 hours a week and still qualify for food stamps and that make me mad for so many reasons but the first reason that popped in my head is how people have stereotyped folks that are on public assistance, they’re lazy, they’re just tryin to milk the system, you know, that kind of thing and that’s just not true. Anybody that’s willing to go to work 60 hours a week should not qualify for any public assistance. Um, you’re right. We shouldn’t leave anybody behind and for the same reason I just stated. You got folks that are willing to the bone for the bare minimum 60 hours plus, cause I know folks workin 80 and 90 hours a week barely gettin by. We should do better to make sure they don’t get left behind and that’s what we’re tryin to do with these Bills. As a matter of fact I am goin to speak
it into existence. We’re gonna do that with this Bill because now is the time, this is long overdue. And with everything I’ve heard today, I don’t even understand how this is still up for debate and I do get that we all have different life experiences and that we all come from different places but when you hear the stories, I just want people that don’t have the experience to close their eyes for a few seconds and just imagine if it’s you or someone you love or care about. This is not the way this country, one of the richest countries in the nation and one of the richest states in the United States, Connecticut this is shameful. This is disgraceful, this is deplorable. I sit here listin to this all day, I’m tired, and its startin to wear and tear on me but your testimony really, really touched a nerve and I just want to thank you for having the courage to share that with us and for being so vulnerable this evenin. So, thank you.

RENEE HANEL: Thank you for all of your work.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You’re welcome. Thank you, Madam Chair. [Applause]

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Next we’ll hear from Maddie Granato.

MADDIE GRANATO: Good evening. That’s hard to follow but. Senator Kushner, Representative Porter and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Maddie Granato, I am a policy manger with the Connecticut Women’s Association and Legal Fund or CWEALF. For 45 years, CWEALF has fought women’s right and economic security here in Connecticut.
I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 764 
AN ACT PROHIBITING ON-CALL SCHEDULING, as well as 
Senate Bill 2 and House Bill 5004 to increase the 
minimum wage.

Women currently make up half of Connecticut Supreme 
Court workforce and are a growing number of 
breadwinners to their families. However women, 
especially women of color are over represented in 
low wage jobs that don’t provide what should be 
basis human rights, a livable wage, paid leave and 
fair scheduling practices.

It is not a secret by now that women in our State 
and across the country face a steep gender wage gap 
with women earning just 83 cents for every dollar 
paid to men. This is a difference that is 
significantly for women of color. The gender wage 
gap has lifelong financial effects and contributes 
directly to women’s poverty. In 2017, 13 percent of 
American women ages 18 to 64 lived below the Federal 
Poverty Level compared with just nine percent of 
men. The wage gap is perpetuated by the fact that 
women make up 69 percent of our state’s low wage 
workforce. Women also continue to shoulder the 
majority of caregiving responsibilities to their 
families.

Across our State low wage workers struggle to earn 
stable income because of their unpredictable work 
schedules. When workers can’t predict their hours 
or pay from day-to-day they are often unable to 
secure childcare or qualify for promotions that lead 
to better health and financial benefits. These are 
all really key components to combatting the gender 
wire gap and really increasing women’s economic 
security. When women don’t have access to a livable
wage or fair predictable schedules at work they also miss out on wages spent on groceries or pay their bills which are expenses that support their families and contributes to Connecticut’s economy.

For this reason CWEALF really supports raising the minimum wage to $15 dollars an hour. The majority of workers who will benefit from an increase in the minimum wage are women. Policies that advance economic security of women in our State like fair scheduling, raising the minimum wage and paid family medical leave are critical to the wellbeing of our workforce and prosperity of our State’s economy. Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Sorry, we just got word about something that we had done that was important to you too, so. I’m sorry so would you just mind repeating that last paragraph. The last paragraph cause I know I was listening up until then.

MADDIE GRANATO: Okay, I said policies that advance economic security of women in our State like fair scheduling, raising the minimum wage and paid family medical leave are critical to the wellbeing of our workforce and prosperity of our State economy. Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): We were gonna let you go another minute or two because we were just distracted and we apologize for that. It’s bad when both Chairs are distracted but it was an issue that I know you would care about, it was mentioned in your testimony. So [Laughter]. I think that a lot of the work that you’re doing on all those issues, one of the things that’s nice about your testimony is you kind of pull it all together, that this is about a package of benefits that really will advance
women particularly in Connecticut and whenever you advance women I think you advance working families and so we’re really thankful for your testimony. So, are there any questions from. Thank you so much, Robyn wants to say thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): That’s it. I just want to say thank you for all the great work that you do, you are such an inspiration and you give me hope for the next generation. So thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): The clapping is probably out of order, but the fact that we have such an enthusiastic crowd after how many hours have we been doing this, I think it is about eight hours, it’s inspiring to us and encouraging to us and we are here for the long haul and we will be here until you all get a chance to testify. Next we have Bob LaBonne. I know you’ve been waiting patiently also, so thank you for your patience.

BOB LABONNE: Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the Labor Committee. I am Robert LaBonne, Jr. from LaBonne’s Market’s. We have three supermarkets in Northwest Connecticut in Watertown, Woodbury and Salisbury. I employ about 335 people. My great, great grandfather started selling meat out of his horse and buggy in Connecticut around 1900 so my some is actually a sixth generation meat cutter so we’ve been in State supplying people food for 120 years.

Madam Chair, earlier in the day you mentioned something about, “I don’t think a gallon of milk is going to go up that much” and my mother always said, knowledge is power. So can I ask you this question? On a hundred dollar grocery order how much profit
does a market make after it pays for the food, the labor, the lights, the insurance? I like to ask my customers this when they come in asking for big donations to educate them.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Well, it’s not typical you get to ask the Committee questions, and obviously I don’t know but I will tell you this, my grandfather started selling fruit, vegetables going door-to-door in neighborhood of Omaha, Nebraska and he worked his way into the grocery business as well and had a grocery store. My father was a grocer, my grandfather, all of my father’s brothers were grocers, my uncle’s in Chicago were grocers. My great grandmother sold milk and eggs in Russia to people who came into her little shop which was just really one little room that they live on the other side so get the grocery business.

BOB LABONNE: We’re practically related.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I know it pretty darn well when I worked in it growing up, so I know there aren’t’ huge margins but I also know that there are some markets that have done very well and my family did very well and I appreciate how well they did for us.

BOB LABONNE: The perception is when I ask customers, they think that we make $20 to $42 dollars on a $100 dollar order and the national average is a dollar. One dollar. So a penny on, one dollar on $100 dollars and $65 dollars goes to pay for the cost of goods for me, labor and benefit is $19 dollars, bags and supplies is $3 dollars, electricity is $3 dollars, so what’ left is a dollar. And 30 percent of independent markets in the last two years have actually had losses. So
we’re up at the challenge. I’m actually, I sent a statement in and I said I was opposed to, I’m not opposed to the minimum wage, but I am opposed to accelerating too fast.

We employ, again 60 percent of people are 16 to 21-year-old high school to college students and I want to share a story. I was playing in a golf tournament and this father was saying my son was in town and talking with George, we teach a lot of skills and it’s not just the training wage but life skills that are ongoing and Mark worked for us in 1976 to 1979. He said to his dad, “You know what dad, I would not be where I’m at today if it wasn’t for LaBonne’s.” He said it, “wasn’t my undergrad or my graduate degree that made me who I am because I was a shy, quite introverted kid that when I got my job at LaBonne’s the got me out of my shell, they taught me customer service. They taught me leadership. They taught me work ethic. They taught me responsibility.” He is an executive vice-president of City Bank or Chase Credit Cards U.S. and those are stories. I can go on and on.

So my fear is the biggest thing that I wanted to say next, is no one has talked all day of the impact that this Bill is going to have on seniors. If people are getting their wages raised, you know, and that’s great and they can make more money. But what about the seniors? We have senior discounts Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursdays and we probably have 80 percent of the seniors come into our store. Their wages aren’t going to go up but food costs are going to go up by 20 to 30 percent and I guarantee it because so much of our labor is students that are making minimum wage and if the they are now going to be $15 dollars an hour a gallon of milk will be well
over six dollars. So the SNAP program is gonna go up exponentially, WICK is gonna go up that is adding more tax dollars so, I just want the Committee to look at everything. I’m okay with it just if you can implement it a little bit slower and just one point on the scheduling I’m glad to hear is because, you know, we pretty much have our schedules out nine days in advance but the only time it would a conflict for me is when, we get compliments for closing our store because we care about our people. I don’t want our kids driving home in the snow and our parents are grateful on the Facebook so as long as that wouldn’t be a caveat, I’m okay because we are always nine days out with schedules because we want to be fair and helpful to our people. I’m here to answer any questions you might have.


SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman. I hate to be the bearer of bad news but based on the question I asked our staff, I think you are in the shift scheduling Bill. Mercantile is mercantile and maybe if the Bill if that language goes forward we can have another conversation.

BOB LABONNE: Yeah, when I’m closed because of snow. There’s nothing coming to the registers to pay the people that day.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): I hear you. Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): So my, oh go ahead. My father never employed 335 people, that’s pretty impressive and when they had the biggest store that he ever owned it quite a lot smaller than that, but yeah he did very well and I am the recipient of
that, you know, I got to go to college, I got to go to a good college as did my brothers and sister and so I really appreciate what you’re doing in the community but I’m sure that you would agree with me that as hard as it is to make money in the business, you are doing well and we have to be cognizant that there are, you know, and I’m sure you are that there are so many people who cannot live on $10.10 an hour and we are so far behind, we’ve gotten so far behind in Connecticut and we just have to make it work. We’ve got to raise the wages of people so that they can afford to live and they will spend money and that will help the whole state and, you know, I think we will find a way to make sure that our seniors are taken care of as well but that is very important to me.

BOB LABONNE: That’s good cause I haven’t heard anybody talk about them. It’s true we donate to all the food banks in the towns are stores are located in and they told us they could not survive, they could not feed because of the amount of people each year that, you know, more people come looking for help that they couldn’t survive without the donations so my concern is, just from my store alone, my three stores, if I just raised from the current minimum wage to $15 dollars starting, it will happen next year, it’s $1.2 million dollars. My bottom line isn’t even close to that at a one percent margin so that just tells me food is going to go up and if I have to eat, you know, any of that, then I’m not going to be able to donate the thousands that I do to the foodbanks so there is going to be ramifications on the donations side as well from small businesses, they are going to be strapped.
SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): But what I’m afraid of, most of the compelling testimony in opposition has come through people like yourself who are concerned about other poor people and, you know, this is a no-win cycle. If we say that we can’t lift the wages of young people or of, you know, minimum wage people because we’re gonna hurt seniors, this is a downward spiral we’re in and there is no solutions that I’ve heard from you about how we get out of that and it’s not just donating in our communities, we have to do that, I’m glad that you do that, you should be acknowledged for doing that cause I’m sure there are a lot of businesses that don’t. And yet that is not the solution either. We’ve got to find a way to lift people out of poverty in our state and I think the most proven way to do that over decades and decades, a century in the United States has been by through the minimum wage. I really believe that Connecticut has fallen way, way behind as has much of our country and so I don’t see any alternative to really lifting people out of poverty. So I’m sorry, you kinda started it when you asked me a question. So you know, you’ll think twice about that. But it just bothers me that what we’ve heard from a lot of people today is we can’t do this for poor people because we are going to hurt these other poor people and we’re not helping anybody.

BOB LABONNE: No, I’m not opposed to it, I would just hope that you would make implement it just a little bit slower not as accelerated as three years, I think it’s just going to raise the cost and then again seniors will get hit the hardest the first. So I’m just saying I’m not opposed to it, just if we could slow it down, that’s all.
SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): But you did realized that we did that with $10.10 and then we ended up here all these years later where $10.10 is so insufficient because we did it so slowly we were ahead when we started that process, we were like the first, we were so proud of it, but now we are so far behind. So, I mean I hear what you are saying and I hope, I’m really trying hard not to come across like I’m trying to attack you. I feel like you’re a tough guy anyway. I am sure you are because you’ve been in business for a longtime. But I do feel like these are really legitimate concerns that I have about how we change life for working families in Connecticut and recognizing there has been so much testimony today about the disproportionate way that affects people of color and communities of color in our State and, you know, and women. These are problems that our society that I think we are trying to address in a very meaningful and very direct way and, you know, I know that’s where I’m coming from and I am sure, yeah, I’m just guessing from looking at you because you came from the same business I did, you probably respect that.

BOB LABONNE: Absolutely, I started when I was eight years old, so I’ve been in for 51 years and I know what it is like to get minimum wage cause I was making $1.25 an hour and when I started when I was eight years old, a dollar a day, but when I was 15 I was making $1.25 an hour and when I turned 16 I was excited because I got a raise to $1.37, the minimum wage but then I figured out this new thing called taxes and I said, “Can I go back to $1.25” because I was making like a dollar with the taxes taken out. So I appreciate your time and I know you guys have
been here all day and no one has fed you so I have a gift for all of you on the board. We brought in these items, we are the only store in Connecticut to sell these, they are from North Dakota but I caution you they say they are like crack, once you start eating 'em you can’t stop [Laughter]. They are called Dot’s Pretzel and LaBonne’s is the only store in Connecticut that sells them, so I’m just warning ya. You’re gonna finish these bags before you leave tonight.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): That is very nice of you. Oh my goodness. Thank you so much. Thank you very much. Representative Polletta.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): Well if you had the experience with the LaBonne family like I do then you will know the people that they are because this is just a small token of what they do. You’re talking about a family who when the volunteer fire department is called out on a snowstorm and these are folks, a lot of them, they get six dollars a call, not even, they donate food to the fire department to feed these folks. You’re talking about a family that goes down to the foodbank and donates thousands of dollars right down on Main Street in Oakville when the foodbank is empty around Thanksgiving and we have homeless people literally going there looking for canned foods and these guys are there. So when and Bob’s in the business but now his son is in the business and his father is in the business and they are not political people. They don’t care about democrat or republican. Their concern is keeping their business afloat and making sure they can provide jobs for our youth which we have a ton of young kids in the summer working at
LaBonne’s Market and you have to come to Watertown or in some of Senator Miner’s district and others and understand the values that they learn working there. It’s not just, I’m stockin shelves. It’s I’m learning how to save money, I am becoming a productive member of society. So I thank you for your time today and I know you listened to both sides as have I, we all have, and understand and through the conversations you’ve had with me personally, I’m going to bring those out, you won’t be able to continue to do business at $15 dollars an hour as you are at $10 dollars and you’re not necessarily opposed to raising the minimum wage just not in the manner that it is being done in these Bills. And I think that is the crux of this. We heard the gentleman before you that owns an amusement park in my area, he even said, I’m not necessarily opposed to raising the minimum wage but give us some predictability. Sometimes people paint a business owner as somebody that’s big and bad, but as you guys can all see, this is a real live human being here that employs hundreds of people in our district, that does good work in our district, that gives money back to our district, the family that runs a golf tournament every year. How much money did you donate off that golf tournament?

BOB LABONNE: About $35,000 just for the foodbanks.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): Thirty-five thousand dollars off of a golf tournament at the Watertown Golf Club. It’s not like he’s taking his money and he is going out and buying a lavish mansion and he’s driving around in a Lamborghini because he’s not. I’ll tell you, he’s not and neither is his dad and neither is his son. So there has to be some sort of happy
median here where we say, okay you’re gonna increase it, let’s talk about how long it takes. You gonna exclude someone because it is a part-time or seasonal worker let’s put that on the table. But to just blanket and paint it with a broad brush I fear is going to result in a loss of jobs and again, it is not a big bad business owner coming in her saying that he is going to, you know, go out and take all his money and go buy himself a huge home. It’s an unfair characteristic. He doesn’t live that life, his family doesn’t live that life. He is one example but there are many across the State of Connecticut that are in his situations. So I hope we will take this into account. Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Representative Porter.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you.

BOB LABONNE: Did you try the pretzels? I really want see the reaction. Somebody open up the bag.

REP. PORTER (94TH): I’m surprised you didn’t hear me over hear moaning and groaning. [Laughter] Oh my goodness, they are delicious and thank you that was a very, very kind and genuine gesture. I know it was genuine. And like the good Representative Ranking Member Polletta, a/k/a Joey, I hear you and I do empathize and I’ve said this before an I will say it again because there are many sides to this story not just two but many sides and the only thing that I’m having trouble with is we’ve had testimony today, $15 dollars is gonna to be really the equivalent of $13.60 cents so we still not really gettin people to $15 dollars in actuality, right. It has been decades since the wages have been
stagnant and I just need to say it, you know, I feel like we are trying to create a happy medium. I feel that we are bein fair, you know, New York City went straight to $15 dollars. I don’t support that in any part of the State because of small businesses. I understand the importance of small businesses and I understand that they are the driving force, the driving economic force in any state especially ours. It’s been 50 years, decades and we’re talkin about doin this over three years with the Senate and the House Bill, four years with the Governor’s Bill and I just asked that you do, as you ask of us, to consider that, that people are strugglin. That you have parents that are going to bed hungry because they are only makin enough money to feed their kids. Renee testified that her, I forget which family member, but they’re workin 60 hours a week and their 17-year-old daughter had to go out and get a part-time job so she could buy her clothes and her personal need items. And we live in a country and a state that is the richest. I don’t think it’s fair that we can have this much of a gap when it comes to wealth.

BOB LABONNE: I have no problem with raising the taxes on the wealthy, I have no problem with that because we have to, you know, I helped start a charity in Waterbury call God Provides Ministry and we provided furniture to 240 homes in Waterbury almost with no funding, zero funding, and I am the Vice-President with a gentleman from Kenya that I am very close with is the most amazing person on the planet, so I am all in favor, when I said here, I don’t think anyone has thought about the seniors is because their Social Security is going to stay the same so if I am forced to raise my food prices I
just want the Committee, what are you going to do about the seniors cause they are going to have to choose between their pharmacy bills, their heat bill or their rent and if their salary, their Social Security stays the same, they are going to be taking it on the chin more than anybody even worse that the one that are at least going to get a raise with minimum wage. So just remember what we say it’s the Greatest Generation of our time.

REP. PORTER (94TH): An I do agree and I want to throw you in the category that you just mentioned. I think you are one of the greatest individuals as well. I don’t know you but I’ve passed you throughout the day. I’ve heard you out there talking. I can genially say in my spirit you are a wonderful and genuine person and I mean that and I applaud the work that your doing. I wish every business owner did what you do. But we know that they don’t and we have to somehow level the playin field and unfortunately $15 dollars an hour is not gonna level the playing field. But if we can get there and we can index it, we have set people on a pathway where they can actually someday become self-sustainable cause I can tell ya, I’ve been that mom that had to depend on welfare and food stamps and my family and the village and it’s not a good feelin, and have to deal with those agencies, worst experience I ever had in my life. They make you feel like trash. And I had worked since I was 14 years old and paid into the system. I had earned every dollar that they were giving me to help me and in my deepest most time of need. I didn’t feel like I was milkin the system but that’s how people that need the help are viewed and made to feel very bad about it and I just think instead of spendin money
on support like that, that we ought to put the money in the people’s pockets because business is dependent on what, household spending. And yes, there is gonna be a crunch in the beginnin but I honestly believe, and it has been proven by the other states that have done this, that’s the other thing, you know, that there is a turnaround and that there is a benefit not just for the people we’re gonna put the money in their paychecks but for the businesses cause if these household’s income grows so will your business because people will be able to come in there and spend even more money with you. So yeah there gonna be some growing pain but think of the growing pains that these families have had for decades and still haven’t been able to find their way out of that dark hole. It’s just a bad place to be and I think it’s a shared sacrifice and we talk a lot about shared sacrifice in this bldng and I’m here to tell you it’s not been shared. It has not because if it had been or it would be the people in this state that are millionaires and billionaires would be payin their fair share, right. The corporations would be givin back, that big tax break that we got from Washington, D.C. would have trickled down and we talk about we shouldn’t mandate what businesses and corporations pay and we should give them incentives. I don’t think people should have to be incentivized to do the humane thing to do what’ right and if that was possible this would have happened a long time ago and we wouldn’t be in this situation right now because businesses would have done the right thing and I think they made it quite evident in the decades that this has happened where wages have been stagnant, productivity is goin up 77 percent and it the minimum wage had kept up with that $21 dollars on average it would be right now.
This state would be bomin and I honestly and truly believe if we just have the intestinal fortitude and the grit to do this and to work our way through the tough times because these folks have been havin tough times for decades I promise you small businesses this tough times will not last decades. This will turnaround quicker than you think. So I’m askin that you trust on that.

BOB LABONNE: I’m on board.

REP. PORTER (94TH): And I thank you so much, I really do. I’ve enjoyed, you know, what your brought in conversation and testimony and I’m definitely enjoying the pretzels. So thank you.

BOB LABONNE: If I could share one story ten years ago and it happened again today I went to the restroom over here to the right and it said closed, and I looked in and there was a woman in there cleaning and I do this every time and I hope all of you walk away will do this anytime you are in a public restroom and there a person cleaning the restroom, dip into your wallet and whatever you’ve got, a five, a ten, a twenty and just give it to them and say thank you for your service, you know we neglect hourly people that are doing some of the toughest of jobs and she said, “No, no thank you” and I said, “Please I appreciate what you’re doing.” I do it every time and the stories in an airport wherever I go, it’s just to see almost tears in their face, so when you leave a hotel, put a $20 dollar bill and say thank you for your service. Do it every time and all of a sudden it’s like doing the right think and the world would become a better place. That’s my mission, make the world a better
place one person at a time. So thank you for your time.

REP. PORTER (94TH): See and this is exactly why I know your business is not gonna suffer at all. You have done too many good and great things in this universe for it not to come back to you and I mean that. I’m listening to you and there is no doubt some businesses will feel the crunch but I can’t even imagine that yours will be one. You’ve done too many good things for it not to come back. You real what you sow.

BOB LABONNE: I had a heart attack six years ago and I think He said, send him back he’s doing good.

REP. PORTER (94TH): See, thank you and Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Yeah I do, I’m not going to prolong this. I think Representative Porter said it very well but I would like to suggest that you leave us with your contact information, I think there’s some good places you could testify up here about making sure that the wealthy pay their fair share and taxes. I loved it when you said that, so maybe we can get together on some other things.

BOB LABONNE: Great I appreciate it.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you, sir. Next we have Dannon Long. Is Dannon still here? Okay maybe she’s out in the hall. Thank you. If she is we will come back to her. Is Keith Beaulieu. Did I say that correct or close?

KEITH BEAULIEU: It hasn’t been said right since I was in the fifth grade so I’m okay with it.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): So how do you pronounce it?
KEITH BEAULIEU: Beaulieu.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Beaulieu, you know, I know a guy named Beaulieu, Chris Beaulieu and I think he spells it the same way, from Maine. Are you related?

KEITH BEAULIEU: No that I know of. I tell people it’s kinda hard to pronounce without actually saying it with a French accent. Good afternoon, I’m sorry it’s no longer afternoon. Good evening Committee Members.

My name is Keith Beaulieu and I own and operate The Main Pub Restaurant in Manchester, Connecticut. My family started the business back in 1980 and I have continued the operation into our 39th year. We currently employ 42 people full and part-time.

I am here today to fully oppose SB 2, HB 5004 and HB 7191 - AN ACT INCREASING THE MINIMUM WAGE. The speed and intensity of the rate of increase of these proposals will cause serious detriment to the restaurant industry as a whole. While I understand the thought behind trying to help those become more self-reliant, I sometimes feel much of proposed bills on business such as my own are being legislated with the Big Box industry in mind. The concept is lost, as most businesses in this state are small. You look at a large corporation and think it will not be a huge issue for them to implement a pay increase as proposed. I can assure that is not the same case for a small singular operator such as myself. Decisions like the one before you can and have had dramatic impacts on the lives of entrepreneurs and their employees.
As it stands today if a $15 dollar an hour minimum wage was in place this past year my slim three percent profit margin in 2018 would have been wiped out as I would be looking at a $70,000.00 dollar increase to my bottom line. This number does not take into consideration the increase that would be involved with having to pay my bartenders and servers a higher wage due to the increase in the tip credit as well. When you do that that number jumps to a $151,000 dollar yearly increase to my payroll, leaving my business with a negative $80,000.00 dollar profit. These numbers don’t even include the increase in workers comp and payroll taxes. My operation would come to screeching halt.

By increasing the minimum wage too quickly, above the appropriate metrics, it will do more harm to the people that need it most, by the way of less business opportunities as businesses will close up shop, hold off on more hiring, cut hours of current employees and no longer hire entry level workforce. In our industry, the use of automation is already becoming every day, as you can see at some of your local fast food chains and grocery stores. This just so happens to be the same sector of the industry whose employees started the “Fight for $15” campaign a few years back.

The restaurant industry prides itself like no other to being an industry of opportunity. Restaurants provide the chance to go from entry level pay to manager’s salaries with hard work. We pay over minimum wage to keep top talent. I take issue with the manner that these bills want to dictate that assent.
The State of Connecticut has proven themselves incapable in running a business, but yet they are making it more difficult for those of us that do. Small business doesn’t have the ability to tax our customers every time we come up with a shortfall. If you haven’t noticed employers are leaving the state. You cannot make that up on the backs of small business that cannot just get up and leave.

While I staunchly oppose this legislation and the many other anti-business policies that are being proposed this year, I am a realist and understand that for the most part this testimony will fall on deaf ears, as many minds in this building are already made up on these issues. With that being the case I ask the following be considered if you want to continue to push the trumped up narrative that Connecticut is open for business.

Will this committee consider a longer plan for implementation of this legislation?

Having only three to four years to implement the largest singular year by year increase will prevent employers such as me with a means and way to figure out how we are going to pay for it all. If this Bill were to pass as is, we are looking at a $1.90 jump in 2019 and a $1.50 jump each of the next two following years.

Also, please do not tie the future increase to the consumer price indexing. This all but assures an annual wage increase. Not to mention it would only give employers a few months to prepare for the higher wages due to the timing of when that CPI report is released.
I would also ask for more attention in this legislation in regards to the “tip credit” as it is tied currently in the State of Connecticut to the minimum wage. This proposed legislation you would be mandating a pay increase to bartenders/servers making well above the $15 proposed wage. While the existing tip credit system guarantees that tipped employees make at least the relevant minimum wage, most earn between $19 and $25 per hour. The push for this pay increase on wait staff will make it even more difficult to financially provide for those that don’t get tipped that would be required in this pay increase. I thank you for your time today and I look forward to entertaining any questions you may have.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Any questions, comments? Keith.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): Thank you. Where is your business located?

KEITH BEAULIEU: Manchester, Connecticut.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): Manchester, okay. I don’t necessarily get up to Manchester that often. I guess I asked Mr. La Bonne this and I’ll ask you the same thing. You talked about, you know, some compromise on the Bill about possibly stretching it out over a longer period of time. Is that something that, you know, you believe would make it more palatable as a small business owner?

KEITH BEAULIEU: Absolutely. We’re talking about like a jump like we haven’t seen in the last 20 years. The average jump in this State for whatever reason has only been on average around I think around 22 to 25 cents over the last 22 years. We
are talking about $1.90 jump in one year and $1.50 and a $1.50. That’s substantial, you know, and unlike anything we’ve ever seen in a small business. Business models that have been created and structured to work in a certain environment completely go out the window when something like this happens. This that you though you were able to take care of and control again are all of a sudden wiped clean and you’re coming up trying to come up with a whole new idea how I continue to employ those 42 people and keep my business operating. So, yeah, like I said I would hope for. I understand that we’re going in this direction like I stated and I’m not against paying a person a fair wage, I do that with all my employees but I think this needs to be thought about in a way that can really lessen the impact to those employers that you need to keep these people employed. You don’t want to lose jobs, you don’t want to lose hours, you don’t want to have people close up shop because of this cause then we’re back to square one here. We’re not doing anything for anybody. The opportunity for employment and offering more employment is also a key way to keep money in the working family. You know, and to do that, excuse me, to allow for that to happen I think that we need time to absorb this, we need time to figure out how we are going to pay for it all because again, this will completely put the restaurant, flip the restaurant industry on its end at least from the small operators perspective like myself. I am a single operation, I am not a restaurant group, I don’t have money backers, I don’t have partners, I work seven days a week. I work over 80 hours a week. I’m the guy that fixes the toilets, I’m the guy that comes in when someone else isn’t there, you know. I’m scared. I’m just
gonna put it to you. I’m scared and so yes, there is no question, spacing it out would be the only thing I can see right now that would mitigate that potential impact.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): And I have similar restaurants in my district as yours. So I’ve heard the same testimony and concern from people and I understand, you know, where you are coming from and I think again, some sort of predictability, cause you’re gonna have to raise your prices. There’s no doubt about it. And you’re gonna have to cut staff where necessary so you need some time to at least plan out now and that’s what has been the concern at least, you know, though me representing my district. Restaurant owners have told me, give us some time because we are going to have to change our menus, we gotta raise prices across the board, we’re gonna, you know, eliminate the extra waitress or waiter and we have to make changes to the place as necessary so our profit margins don’t drop off significantly where it’s not even worth it for us to be in business anymore. So I understand your passion. Obviously if we can spread it out over a longer period of time, I think it would make it a little more palatable.

KEITH BEAULIEU: Yeah, and just to touch on that profit margin like the gentleman before me, you know, we work very hard for very, very little the restaurant industry on a well-run restaurant, I’m talking, I’m a good runner of a restaurant and I came in with a three percent profit margin. The numbers, the math just doesn’t add up in regards to how this works, so that’s obviously, you know when I look at the numbers I sit here and ponder how do I, how do I maintain the level that I’ve continued to
maintain and, you know, there’s a lot of questions there.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Representative Hall.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank your for coming out and sharing your testimony this evening now. So you said you’ve been in business, or your family has been in business since 1980.

KEITH BEAULIEU: Yes, sir.

REP. HALL (7TH): And so I imagine that when the previous minimum wage was proposed that, did you come and testify at that time as well.

KEITH BEAULIEU: I’ve been here before, yes.

REP. HALL (7TH): And so, were your concerns at that time the same concerns that you have now?

KEITH BEAULIEU: No, I’d say they are different. I’d say, and a lot of that’s got to do with the intensity of this increase obviously, the amount of it.

REP. HALL (7TH): So what were your concerns then?

KEITH BEAULIEU: Again just a dictation from this side to my side in regard to how the relationship between employer and employee should go. My concern obviously was the unforeseen affect it would have on the bottom line and I made adjustments, I made adjustments in whether, you know, I did more with less, yes. I did more with less, you know. People that maybe were maybe just doing prep work in the kitchen, now became prep works and dishwashers. Maybe I didn’t hire that one dishwasher to do just dishwashing. I found ways to make that happen. But again that went to less hours for somebody else. So
there were small adjustments made to get through that adjustment when we went to $10.10 three years ago. Like I stated to you, the minimum wage rises, I understand that and I’m not saying that should never, ever happen again. My ultimate concern here like I said at the end of my testimony here is I would like to ask that we look at a longer implementation of this to allow for small business, which is what I am, small business, again I feel like there are many times in today’s testimony from all side that we keep talking about big box, that is a completely different realm of commerce than what we do in small business. There’s nothing to really absorb the things on my end so. And to answer your question there were changes that were made that did affect people’s hours but the concern here today and going forward is the rate and speed of this proposed legislation is talking about.

REP. HALL (7TH): So, just a couple of more questions. So in 2015 is when $10.10, 2014?

KEITH BEAULIEU: It was about three years ago I believe.

REP. HALL (7TH): And so did your employment numbers change, because you said you had 43 part-time and fulltime. Did that, has that changed since then? Has it gone up, has it gone down, has it stayed the same?

KEITH BEAULIEU: My business I expanded my business to include a patio so I had seasonal work so I have more employees now during the summertime due to the fact that I have more seating. So in that regard, there was an increase. But as overall I’ve maintained the same. The only change I had was in regards to the increase in seating that I had added.
REP. HALL (7TH): And just this last question and I know that you said that you’re, you don’t want it to happen necessarily but.

KEITH BEAULIEU: I’m a realist, I know it’s going to happen.

REP. HALL (7TH): If it were to happen, but just from a pure business standpoint, from your perspective, do you believe there should be a minimum wage?

KEITH BEAULIEU: Yes.

REP. HALL (7TH): Okay, thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): any other comments or questions? Representative Pheanious Wilson.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Yes, good evening. I wonder if you can tell me what you think a reasonable timeframe would be to implement this change?

KEITH BEAULIEU: How does 15 years sound for you? {Laughter}

REP. P. WILSON (53RD): That’s what I fear.

KEITH BEAULIEU: Yeah although that’s not the case here. You know, six, seven years.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOS (53RD): That’s the question I asked you but I am looking at it I guess from the perspective of the, you know, because I used to a single mother who had to get it together, so a woman with a six-year-old child, the kid would be in high school by the time, like I’m looking at how long it would take a family to climb out of a hole, or the hole that the minimum wage currently, you know,
represents for people. And I am just trying to see how in the world we can balance that because I hear what you are saying. I am very sympathetic to the things you and the other gentleman said. I can see, you know, it’s a difficult thing but I think how much more difficult for the people who are in fact at that minimum wage. Cause I know you’ve been to the grocery store, you’ve tried to buy, you know, you do it everyday I’m sure when you buy food, or diapers, or some other commodity and I’m just trying to understand from the perspective of the consumer the person who will spend money at your restaurant maybe, how we can ask them to wait the length of time you are suggesting we take for you to absorb that kind of an increase.

KEITH BEAULIEU: Yeah, my perspective on that and I’m not shining any disconcert for that but I am looking at the concern of when I look at numbers on a piece of paper and the reality of does it work financially. Is there money in my coffers to pay those people that rate? And the reality of that situation may be better for some that others but again on the small business level, you know if it’s not there to give, if its not there to provide, then it’s not there.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Well then that is sort of the position she finds, that you know, the woman I’m talking about that has three children.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Representative Wilson Pheanious I don’t want to interrupt but could you hold the microphone a little closer to your mouth because we’re having a hard time hearing you?

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Sorry. I am just looking at it from the perspective of when someone
doesn’t have money, like the people we’re talking about what they do when they don’t have money, your kids don’t. You know you can’t buy a winter coat or some shoes, or, you know, forget college, forget any of the kinds of things that can pull you out of the hole and move you forward and I’m just trying, you know, cause I hear what you are saying and I hear the emotion and the fear, you know, in your voice and, you know, I’m very sympathetic to that. I understand what you’re saying but I’m also hearing the other side of this coin.

KEITH BEAULIEU: I don’t deny there is another side of it and I don’t want to put any less importance to that persons plight that you’re talking about.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Do you know what it’s like when there’s no money. Like you’re telling me you haven’t got money to do it well people don’t have money to get to work and feed their kids and buy.

KEITH BEAULIEU: I’m not denying that there is a problem there. I’m just speaking on the behalf of regards to you’re looking to put, to solve this problem on business, to solve this problem. I’m speaking from a small unit operator in the small business community just stating I don’t have it and I don’t seen it and I’m scared to understand how I am going to provide it for my current employees so that they don’t end up in that situation, that one you’re referring to and the restaurant business is all I know. It’s what I’ve done my entire life. I wouldn’t know what I would do if, like I’m probably a negative $80,000 dollar profit that closes the business down. Who runs the business on a negative $100,000 dollar profit like that. So then the
people that I currently employ may not be in that situation, I suspect most of them will find other work, but now I’m sure they are put in a position to struggle as well. So I’m not denying that there’s problems on both sides. I guess today you’ve heard many people talk and share that story with you and other versions of that. I’m here to present that this is a see-saw. There is cause and effect here and there’s, you know, there’s choice have consequences for the lack of a better term or better word. And again I’m not against it. I don’t want people to be in that position and I want to help people like that and I think in the restaurant industry I think is a big player in that we do bring people in at entry level at zero experience, zero skill set and bring them up more so probably than I can think of any industry. That industry that I was just referring to will have a hard time trying to continue to do that and possibly cause more of that situation you’re talking about. That would be my answer to your question. We’ve got a problem here, I understand that again, I’m not against people making a livable wage. Like I said I pay my people over minimum wage and those that start at minimum wage usually work their way up to achieving much higher pretty quickly in their careers in the restaurant industry. I see that as a whole and it definitely happens in my place. But I’m not sure that answers your question but I’m speaking. I want to make sure there is some attention paid to the other side of this as well in regard to, you know, numbers are numbers and at the end of the day if its not there for those for us to give then what have we accomplished as well. Have we improved it at all, have we moved into a situation where it’s better, maybe so if your forcing the big box to do this and
that element of the workforce is risen to a higher level but again there could be some deterrent to small business for sure and I just want some attention put to that on all these decision making processes on everyone’s side so that, you know, you had to be put in a situation where businesses are closing and we are losing jobs as well.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Thank you very much for your testimony.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman. Could you tell me how long you’ve been in business.

KEITH BEAULIEU: In June it will be 39 years.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): And with respect to the recession were there wage increases during that period of time.

KEITH BEAULIEU: There, no, there were no wage increases during that time and I actually went back, as the owner, went back to bartending. I took a bartending shift away from everyone of my bartenders so that I could use the tip money to go ahead and put back into the kitty to pay payroll.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Through you, Madam Chairman. So when I look at the language one of the things I wonder about is if we were to establish a schedule of increase and then put in on a COLA is some kind of a freeze of any value to you at all in your industry at some point along the way if an unemployment level hits a certain number of whatever the other parameters are of recession hits another level?
KEITH BEAULIEU: I’m not quite sure I understand your question, Senator.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): So in drafting language, if the language included, so over the next six years, this is going to be the pay increase on minimum wage. There are the graduated increases.

KEITH BEAULIEU: Okay.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): And at the end of that period of time there is a COLA. If I heard you correctly there were no wage increases during the recession and one of the things when I look at a schedule like this what I worry about is exactly what you said, which is, am I going to be open or am I going to be closed? And I know some businesses were able to stay open. But if we have you on a schedule and everyone on the schedule of wage increases despite a declining economy, in all likelihood you go out of business. So would an escape clause of some limited language that said, if we have an unemployment level of “X” or if we have a recession that has gone on for “X” period of time, if there was a scheduled wage increase whether it’s on a schedule or COAL does that help at all?

KEITH BEAULIEU: Of course.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you, Senator. Representative Porter.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Madam Chair and thank you for your testimony. Guess I want to ask you how many of your employees make more than minimum wage?

KEITH BEAULIEU: Well, all the front of the house.
REP. PORTER (94TH): A percentage, just a percentage.

KEITH BEAULIEU: Sixty percent. I’d say 65-70 percent. I can get you an exact number but I honestly feel confident in my answer in regard to that, probably close. Well over 50 percent because, 50 percent that would be the front of the house staff, that would be bartenders and servers and they make well beyond that. And the back of the house, the majority of those people, about half are over that point, half would be below that point. So, you know, somewhere about 65 percent.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Okay and out of that 65 percent how many of them are makin $15 dollars or more?

KEITH BEAULIEU: Over 50 percent.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Okay, so this would only impact from what you’re sayin 35 to 50 percent of your employees.

KEITH BEAULIEU: Well I’m using the tip on the staff in the front of the house and that brings up a whole other topic again to the tip credit portion of this. If that were to continue to be coupled or raised or put aside all together or whatever possibility would affect the tipping aspect of the business for sure so that would come back, that would bring those numbers down.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Okay, so lets not include tip wage earnings.

KEITH BEAULIEU: Okay, so then repeat then how many of those people that are not tip wages are currently making?

REP. PORTER (94TH): More than $10.10 an hour.
KEITH BEAULIEU: Percentage wise, Ma’am?

REP. PORTER (94TH): Yes, please.

KEITH BEAULIEU: We’re talking about, we’re taking the tip employees out of that I’d say about 80 to 90 percent of the people.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Are makin more than $10.10 and out of that 80 to 90 percent, non-tip wage workers. How many of them are makin $15 dollars an hour or more?

KEITH BEAULIEU: Somewhere probably close to 25 percent.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Okay. So that brings it back to about 75 percent impact here, is that correct?

KEITH BEAULIEU: I’m not sure. We talked about a couple different numbers there.

REP. PORTER (94TH): I’m trying to figure out how many of your non-tip wage workers are makin more than or making $15 dollars or more an hour. That’s where we are.

KEITH BEAULIEU: So maybe this is easier. I have a staff of 42 people. Non-tipped workers that are making more than $15 dollars if I count that. I’m sorry, more that $15 dollars is the question?

REP. PORTER (94TH): Well $15 dollars an hour or more.

KEITH BEAULIEU: About six.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Out of the 42?

KEITH BEAULIEU: Yeah, that would be management, high end staff, yes.
REP. PORTER (94TH): Okay, then how many of your employees are non-tip workers out of the 42?

KEITH BEAULIEU: Again about half.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Okay. Thank you. And you know, just I really have listened to everything you’ve had to say, you have my attention I want you to know that.

KEITH BEAULIEU: I thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Because you started out saying that we probably wouldn’t be listening and I am definitely a person that listens to everyone that takes the time to come into this building and make a sacrifice.

KEITH BEAULIEU: I didn’t say you wouldn’t listen, my thought the minds had been made up prior to coming in today. I know that’s where most people stand on these issues and feel staunchly about them and that’s what I was referencing to regard to that. I have no doubt that you were actually listening to what I was saying. Just a matter of people’s head were when they walked in the door today.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You said it would fall on deaf ears, so my translation of that was, I wouldn’t be listenin. I will digress because all I wanted to state is that you did have my attention and I do take everything you’ve expressed, your concerns and your ideas seriously because we do care about small business. I said it before and I’ll say it again, this isn’t the first time I said this today, or this evenin that I understand the importance of small business especially here in the State of Connecticut and you’ve had to do more with less and I hear you but we have people that have had to do more with
less and we’ve actually had agencies where they’re cutting services to the people that already don’t have anything that are crying out to us as well because they have to do more with less. And they’re askin us for more money in the budget so that they don’t have to close their doors because they are servin people in dire need. So it’s a real tricky balancin act that we’re tryin to accomplish here. And as said to the gentleman who came before you, Keith, I think we’re bein, you know, fair. With all things considered and where the majority of the workers are in this state, we’re not talkin about a small percentage of people, this state is sufferin for that. We’re losin revenue because we’re not payin people and you are right, small businesses have been made to suffer because of what we’ve allowed big businesses to do. I do agree with you on that wholeheartedly and it’s a shame that they haven’t done the right think because is they had, you wouldn’t be sittin here today.

KEITH BEAULIEU: Yeah and I’m definitely concerned like I shared in my testimony is that term big box we use a lot in this building and much to your point I appreciate you saying so, small business makes up the majority of the businesses in this state, you know, mom and pop places. Like I said my father started this business when I was four-years old. I’m now 42 years old, we’re continuing a legacy. We’re the longest running restaurant in the Town of Manchester behind Cavey’s and I am very prideful for that. I’m very prideful for employing 42 people and helping people start their careers. I want to continue to do that. I want to continue to be able to have that success so that I can do for those employees what you’re trying to do here today for
other people. Again, I’m just looking at numbers on a piece of paper and I don’t know how I’m gonna, I mean I’ll be forced to figure it out and there might be some decisions that are not going to be happy for some people and might be counter effective in regard to the legislation you’re trying to pass here what it’s supposed to do. But at the end of the day, I got to make sure my door stays open for my family number one and then those people that are working for me and keeping my business afloat. Again I am not one to discredit what is going on, on the other side and what you are trying to accomplish here, I just hope that we, at both ends of the side here can come to something that works for everybody so that small business doesn’t take the brunt of the hit here for legislation based for big box mistakes for lack of a better word.

REP. PORTER (94TH): And I want you to continue to succeed as well. And I sincerely mean that. You’ve been in business almost 40 years and I hope it is another 40 plus 40.

KEITH BEAULIEU: Me, too.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You have a son, right?

KEITH BEAULIEU: I have two actually.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Two sons.

KEITH BEAULIEU: Actually just had another.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Congratulations. Yeah, there’s a legacy there, you know, and I’m not trying to destroy that or eliminate that. I want you to have continued success and I think together we’re gonna find a happy medium and I do believe that we’re almost there. And I thank you for comin in and
giving this testimony today because all perspectives and experiences need to be considered as we move forward, so thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Any other comments or questions? Thank you for coming in. Next we have Scott Dolch. Did I say that right?

SCOTT DOLCH: You did Madam Chair. Good evening, everybody. Thank you, I know you guys have been here a long time and obviously representing. My name is Scott Dolch. I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Restaurant Association representing the voice of the industry. We have over 8,000 restaurants in this state and 155,000 employees making up 10 percent of our states’ workforce.

I am here today to address the three minimum wage increase Bills SB 2, HB 5004 and HB 7191 the minimum wage increase Bills and how these proposals will impact the restaurant industry.

We recognize there is a desire to increase the current minimum wage however, the CRA opposes the current proposals as written. We believe the increases being proposed will lead to higher labor costs, in addition to increases in the cost of commodities, which will undoubtedly damage the hospitality industry for both employers and employees. Obviously you just heard from Keith and some of those numbers, you know, we talk about and not that as an association we’re not against any increase but so fast, is really, you know, how fast this legislation and the Committee here is looking at the three year window or even four from the Governor.
When you look at those numbers Over the last 20 years minimum wage has increased on average $0.22 cents a year. The highest annual increase small businesses or any business in Connecticut has faced has only been 50 cents. This proposal is asking for $1.90 in its first year and then $1.50 and $1.50. If the Labor Committee and the Connecticut General Assembly are going to consider increases we ask that the implementation be extended, allowing business owners to absorb these costs over a longer period of time. We talk about $10.10 and what happened then but looking to those gaps those were 30 cent, 40 cent increases not $1.90, $1.50 and $1.50 which are staring these small business owners in the face.

Annual increases, this high, this fast will have a devastating effect and will force these restaurants, these 8,000 small businesses to make very difficult decisions of raising their prices in the competitive industry that we’re in is already going to be touch enough, they are going to have to cut jobs. They are going to have to eliminate hours and they possibly might even have to close their doors.

On another topic that I know Keith mentioned the wage increases are our major concern but the current tip-wages for servers and bartenders will significantly increase as well. Connecticut allows employers to pay employees who earn gratuities a lesser wage that the minimum wage. As long as that wage along with the gratuities received equals or exceeds the minimum wage, commonly referred to as a tip-credit. I know it’s confusing as I try to explain it to people, you know, you’re able to pay a server in the restaurant industry 34.6 percent of the minimum wage or a bartender, I’m sorry 36.8 or a bartender 15.6. What that equates to is $6.38 for a
server and $8.23 per hour for a bartender before their tips.

We have numbers from restaurants in Connecticut are average earnings of servers, haven’t got to bartenders, the servers is about $25 dollars and hour. Currently in this Bill the tip-credit does not, the percentage does not change. In our tip-credit percentage in this State is the highest in New England for everyone to know at the table. Massachusetts currently is $3.85. Rhode Island is in the $3.50’s I believe. So ours is already as a server wage of $6.38. So looking at a restaurant owner like Keith and looking at his business plan with his current employees and his servers, this Bill does not change the fact that increase for people making $25 dollars an hour as high as, I spoke to some restaurants today, $35 to $38 dollars an hour. They would be asked to give an increase, a wage increase that the State would mandate for those servers and for those bartenders which is going to make it even more difficult as you talked, Representative Porter about the people that are making minimum wage, the back of the house, the people that matter most. They will have less money to give to them because they are being ask to go a dollar, just in it’s first year to go to $12 dollars if you don’t touch the tip-credit, the tip-credit goes to $7.50 a hour for a server.

So someone making $25 dollars and hour is going to get another $1.20, that’s gonna come out of the pocket of the business plan, of the budget of the restaurant.

I just obviously wanted to talk a little bit about the tip-credit I know that sometimes on side, but we
consider ourselves the industry. As one in three Americans have had a job in the restaurant industry from national numbers and 8 out of 10 restaurant owners began their career in an entry-level position in the restaurant industry. We provide unique employment opportunities and allow for flexibility not offered in many other industries. Wage mandates are an ineffective way to reduce poverty and will cause restaurant operators to make very difficult decisions. These decisions end up hurting the very employees that wage increases are meant to help. The current proposals will have a negative effect on small and large businesses but most importantly on the employees of Connecticut. I appreciate you guys giving me this time, and I’d appreciate any questions you have. Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Any questions or comments? Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman. So I was curious about the Senate Bill 764, the on-call shift scheduling. As drafted is that a manageable Bill?

SCOTT DOLCH: It is not, I believe we’ve submitted written testimony, if we haven’t we will make sure that we are opposed to the Bill on the on-call shift scheduling. I know there has been plenty of testimony in here. I know Representative Polletta and Senator Miner, you guys both made comments about that in our industry, the restaurant industry how a 72 hour on-call, how that effects our industry. I know looking at severe weather and many other changes in our industry when you talk about patios and these small restaurants that are looking to add space for themselves to be able to, you know,
outdoor space, and be able to have to call if we have an April day if it becomes 75 or 80 degrees being able to make decisions to call people in or on the flip side if there’s thunderstorms and lightening as I know someone had mentioned, if there’s awnings or things like that but there is other related issues that affect this industry and affect and owner having to operate and thinking that they are going to have to either have a good night and they are not. And what they need to do and how they prepare and talking ahead of time the weather, as all you guys know in this State, you know it sometimes even is difficult to judge the weather on hours at a time.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you and the last thing was reference to the possibility of a software of some software package that might assist certain industries with scheduling even including weather events to some degree. Are you aware of any such software for the restaurant industry?

SCOTT DOLCH: Specifically, I can’t speak to just the restaurant specific software. Obviously there is a lot of data. I mean using technology our restaurateur’s are the most successful user of POS systems technology to understand how they order inventory, how they should staff and to make sure they are all working on these thin margins were talking about. So I do know that they work off of that to how they make their schedules now but the current Bill as written with the timeframe for them to be able to be able to make decisions, unfortunately would not. Things like bereavement, to weather related issues, to any other things related to this industry where obviously a lot of the testimony was about the big box and the
Walmart’s and how they are taking advantage where I don’t believe that’s how our industry runs. I feel it’s, you know, if there is an opportunity that we think, you know that if a restaurant owner thinks they are going to grow their business in a night and they want to be able to call and have an on-call and I think that’s the industry you get in. And when we talk about the servers and bartenders making $25 to $30 dollars an hour, that is the industry they are signing up for. You know, that’s the flexibility our industry provides. People being able to work late nights to pay for schooling and making $28 dollars at a bar or a server, a single parent and the mother we talked about being able to come in and make their schedule and be that flexible and I think you want to look at that on the flip side for an owner, you know, if they are gonna offer that flexibility on one side they have to also be able to have the flexibility to make sure they are successful for their business as well.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): And so if the on-call shift differential was limited to those that were at minimum wage because I do get the notion that, especially amongst folks that are lower wage earners, the impact of their coming in or not coming in may be something to consider. Is that less of an issue?

SCOTT DOLCH: I think it is worth a conversation and going back to specifics, obviously it wasn’t written in that current Bill. But I think it’s, I think it’s with anything, I want to make sure you guys are clear that I’m here tonight, it’s about a conversation and finding solution and understanding that there are issues that in any Bill that’s written there are challenges. But I would say, you
know, we’d be open to the conversation of having discussion but just blanketing and saying this is a fact that’s happening in the big box stores and then it also has our industry in there and we talk about how it affects the 72 hour, that’s significant when you’re talking about some of these restaurants that maybe only employ eight to ten people and all of a sudden they’re able to open their patio and let’s say the first week of April because the weather turned, you know in a day and it’s going to be 65 degrees and they have a chance to open that up, but if they can’t call additional shift members to come in, you know, you have to have that flexibility and that current Bill as written does not allow that.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you. Thank you for staying. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I do want to point out that the Bill we heard earlier testimony on was pointed out that it would only impact business, I believe, with 25 or more employees. So the example you gave where they only have 8 employees I don’t think it was intended to impact those if I am correct. Actually the person, but I think that’s what it was.

SCOTT DOLCH: I was just giving an example, Senator, I apologize but I mean I also want you to know when we talk about small business in restaurants, you know, there are multiple restaurants well over 25, we’re talking about a single operator in Manchester with 42 employees. You know, if have you been to the Main Pub, you know there’ll be a lot of restaurants that would fall above that 25 and that’s why I would want to have that conversation, you know, looking where that employee threshold is for this Bill.
SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I have other question, I believe you testified about tip-wages in other parts of the country. Do you happen to know what the tip-wage is in New York?

SCOTT DOLCH: In New York currently it is $8.05 is the server wage. I actually believe in my testimony I supplied from the National Restaurant Association every state’s current wage and their server wage as well and you can see federally it is $2.13, obviously ours is $6.38 so where that compares and look at the states, not only New York but Rhode Island is $3.89 currently in 2019, Massachusetts is $4.35, New Hampshire $3.26, New Jersey $2.13 federally. So understand that, you know, some of these states have almost a double in our server wage.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Any other comments or question? Representative Hall.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you for coming out this evening. How long have you been with the trade association?

SCOTT DOLCH: Almost a year.

REP. HALL (7TH): Okay, so you weren’t here in the previous round of debate around the minimum wage?

SCOTT DOLCH: I obviously was not. I came in the last couple of weeks of session, but obviously been well-versed in conversations and understand from other industries I’ve been in and working, you know, in times with this industry with the Little Caesar’s franchise and understand how the minimum wage affects the restaurant industry. So, yes.
REP. HALL (7TH): So we're talking about the time we moved of $10.10 and so that’s the conversation we’re on cause I was wondering if the testimony in maybe there’s notes of history of testimony from the trade association around what the impacts would be on the restaurant industry and whether or not those concerns had come to pass or, that’s negligible. I guess, well if you don’t know the answer to that.

SCOTT DOLCH: Well I think the biggest point of all that I want to make, and share this, but giving to my own members to talk about, when you’re talking about the last 20 years, I mentioned a 22 cent increase, whether or not that was right or not, but that is what has been and even going to $10.10 it went from $8.25, to $8.70, to $9.15, to $9.60 to $10.10 so that’s the conversation we are trying to have her tonight is, you know, we’re not talking about $1.90 or $1.50 and having, in any part of those testimonies, any part of those discussion, the small businesses, and any business like I think Keith mentioned, he is trying to figure out a way to survive. And I think having an understanding of trying to increase this fast, this quickly, I know the other side and the conversations you guys are having but you also need to look at this small business owner and say, at that time when it went to $10.10 the largest increase they faced during that time was a 50 cent increase in a year. So it gives them time to prepare. Maybe increase their menu a little bit, maybe figure out their staffing issues, how they’re gonna order, what they’re gonna do with the size of their place, now you’re asking for $1.90 to $1.50 that is drastic, that’ almost three times or four times higher than ever an increase was in 20 years they faced.
REP. HALL (7TH): No, I understand what you're saying but the question I'm asking, and maybe because you weren't here, you may not know what the conversation was. I'm just wondering if the same concerns that you are bringing today were the same concerns that the expressed at that time with regard to the rate or what have you, with regard to increasing the minimum wage and whether or not those concerns materialized and so if you're not familiar with that, that's fine. There is a different increase now and I understand that but the question I'm talking about or asking is were they the same concerns then the same concerns now?

SCOTT DOLCH: Sure, I think there's definitely similarities to those concerns, Representative Hall but you also have to remember though and just getting back to, I guess, I'm still stuck on that question that you're asking and how that affected their concerns. You know, it is a starting point. We go back to the minimum wage in our industry, it's where you start your entry level position. Eight out of ten restaurant owners and entrepreneurs started at the entry level in this business. So no one in our restaurant, as you walk in, the labor is the most important, you know, the highest part of their budget but at the same time, the people who work there, their most important people that they have and looking to grow and keep them and that is a challenge they face, so I think the conversation was probably the same challenges back then that they are having now and they are worried about, they are scared. Keith mentioned, and you heard that in his testimony, he is worried about how to keep his business open. That's the conversation I'm having walking around these states and talking in these
restaurants. They are scared of, you know, looking at their numbers, how are they going to stay afloat. They don’t have the big box money in the backend for technology and the things that are maybe going to like help out some of those bigger stores or the Walmart’s, they don’t have that. They have the staff that they care about and then the other conversation we haven’t talked about is, you know, when you look at a cook or a line-cook that he has that’s making $15 dollars an hour and all of a sudden we go to an increase this fast to $15 dollars to someone that’s walking in the door, what do you tell that person that has been there one to two to three years, sorry I can’t pay you anymore so you’re gonna stay the same as the entry level. They are gonna walk out the door and that is fear that they have to, the domino effect in this industry that we have, that you to the $15 dollars and someone that is making $15 or $16 dollars they are going to expect more because they’ve given their time. And I think that is the other piece of this conversation is extending this out and having this opportunity for them to prepare and how they’re gonna take care of their employees cause that, I think does get lost a little bit that they want to do that. He wants to keep 42 people. He would love to hire more. He would love to expand the restaurant and there are many other restaurants like him, there are 8,000 of them.

REP. HALL (7TH): So I think you partially answered or attempted to answer the question I was asking because I think that is the point where there was a time where the minimum wage was at $8.25 and it went to $10.10 so there were folks, the line-cook or what have you was making $10.10 and then there were folks
who two years later or three years later showed up and was making $10.10. The question is anecdotally you may have information but did those folks walk-away from the job? So that’s the, I mean I’m trying to figure out what the impact was then and I’m not saying there would be, but we have to have this conversation about how to roll this out, what the impacts were, but I’m just trying to wrap my mind around. We did this before and there were huge concerns about what the impact would be and we’ve heard about killing jobs and all these other horror stories and so the fundamental question I’m asking is did any of those things come to pass. And so I’m not saying that is not what would happen now. I’m just trying to, you know, pass this law, we’re trying to figure out if something, if we did this before, and we’re moving in this direction now, how do we navigate it if some of those things were happening, so how me make sure they don’t happen, if we need to slow it down, or keep it. What I’m trying to wrap, is what were the impacts there and whether or not those are concerns.

SCOTT DOLCH: Well I think but to your question, it is hard to measure when you look at $8.25 in 2010 and we got to $10.10 in 2017, so that’s seven years. A $1.85 over seven years, okay. You are asking for $1.90 in a year, so yes to say that some of, there is obviously any impact anytime you increase any wages with commodities or other things that you’re gonna have to change your business but when you start looking at the stark reality of those numbers, you’re asking for an increase that took seven years to get to in one year for these business owners, from $8.25 to $10.10 and from $10.10 to $12 dollars is what you’re asking in the first year. So to that
point but also the, I want to be clear, that this Committee needs to understand the server and bartender piece to this because I think that gets lost and when I talk about what these servers and bartenders are making with that tip-credit, you know, they’re like they're not making minimum wage, no they are not, they are being paid under that but their tips are averaging $25 dollars an hour, some as high as $34 dollars. So right now within the Bill that’s written, the tip-credit percentage does not change. So we’re looking at an increase just with the Bill here, $7.59 in it’s first year, $8.53 and $9.48 for server wage. That is mandated by the State now and they are making $25 or $35 dollars an hour. How do you tell the restaurant owner and say where does that money come from and you’ve also got to find it as well for the other minimum wage or other employees that aren’t making tips. So that is a big concern of why we’re here tonight to make sure, when you look at other states and you guys want to compare other states, and these conversations were having about tip-credit and freezing tip-credit or decoupling, we’re only one of five states that it’s coupled with the Bill. I mean Maryland just had a conversation, they froze it at $3.63. So that’s a big piece to that. That’s another part of the labor cost that is a substantial increase and it’s gonna up $1.20 just on the server wage in its first year. So, I know it’s tough for me to answer the question of history, Representative Hall but I hope I’ve tried the best I can to answer your question.

REP. HALL (7TH): No, and I appreciate that now. That did provide some understanding for myself. And so maybe the history that is probably not, isn’t
important but maybe we can look at states that have done this and what the concerns were from your trade associations in those states and what the impacts were of increasing the minimum wage and so maybe you could talk a little bit about that because maybe that is a better conversation for us to have as far as what, because we have some examples of states who have gone to $15 dollars or gradually moving to that direction and what the impacts have been.

SCOTT DOLCH: Yeah and I think it is a great question for me representing an association in the State of Connecticut. We have 52 restaurant associations to include Guam and Washington, D.C. and you look at the increases of going to $15 dollars, we also don’t have a lot of data. I know some people ask that question on the EPI report, there’s not a lot of data, especially states around us that have gotten to $15 dollars. I know some people have said, you know, we’re woefully behind but, you know, there are states that have passed the $15 dollars but they are not there yet and we’re still, if you look at the states around us, you know, with Rhode Island at $10.50 and Massachusetts at $12 dollars and New Hampshire at $7.25, Vermont at $10.78 we are still on that equal playing field. Yes, New York and even in Putnam County is $11.10. I know a comment was made about, oh well New York is at $15 dollars, well New York City, but there’s counties that are going to get their gradually so I don’t think there is enough data out there about, you know, states that have gotten to $15 dollars and what the impacts have been and obviously looked out west and we’ve seen some of the repercussions in Seattle in the restaurant industry obviously that’s what I speak towards. And we’ve seen, you know,
more, the stuff I’m testifying on, we’ve seen jobs cut, we’ve seen hours cut, we’ve seen automation and how many times this actually, you guys read every day about technology walking in and there is no more hostess, it’s a touch screen or there is automation at the QSR. So I want you to know this is a hospitality industry. We want to have people working and I think that is an option that is being lead down those paths right now with some of those cities and states because they are looking at their numbers and their bottom lines are where their labor costs are and increases so I don’t think we have enough data out there with these other states to sit here and say, hey it’s worked there. I think the conversation is we want to sit here with you guys and say, hey yes it’s been talked about but just because someone else has don’t mean that is the best solution. Let’s find a solution together that we think is best for Connecticut as well. Also don’t forget I know we talk about this all the time but Connecticut is also a state and it’s economy is not maybe some of these other states as well and we want to make sure that we’re trying to protect the small businesses that are in our state, you know and make sure they’re gonna become prosperous with that. So I hope that answers your question and I’d be happy to have other conversation regard those other states but I just don’t think we have enough data yet to show.

REP. HALL (7TH): It doesn’t and thank you for that and I know it’s been going on a little long and I apologize but actually just one last question. So, you talked about, you talked about automation and so when we’re talking about automation in relationship in an increase of minimum wage and so you could
probably, you’re probably best suited to answer question like that. Are they instituting automation only in places where they are talking about or increasing minimum wage or is automation happening in your industry throughout the country.

SCOTT DOLCH: Well it depends. I mean the majority.

REP. HALL (7TH): Throughout the country even in states that are not even considering the minimum wage.

SCOTT DOLCH: But you also, Representative Hall have to remember that the majority of automation is expensive, okay. So the companies that are doing it first and foremost are the ones that can, the larger chains. There’s 8,000 restaurants in our state, the majority of my members are not chains. You know when you see some of these larger, McDonalds, someone that’s brought on automation and yes, its happening in states that don’t have it but you also have to look at your restaurants that are small business owners utilizing this automation yet. I’d say the answer, MGM just put out an article, they have automated bartenders in their casinos. So to that point, yeah it might be in a state that has a lower minimum wage but it’s MGM. When you’re comparing it a sole proprietor, small business owner in Manchester or in one of your towns in Hartford, that doesn’t, I don’t think relates to where automation is going. I think anything, I’d say technology is always, I tell any of our members like you have to be up with curve because with our POS systems and how it benefits for you to work with your business on your inventory and staffing, and, you know, automation as well but at the same time nothing goes back to we are the hospitality industry. Nothing
goes back to you guys, going into a restaurant sitting down and having the service that you have and the chef in the back and everything else that this industry provides and the hard work that is put in to it. And I don’t want to lose sight of that, you know, in any way of looking at how automation it’s just a way of means to make sure these guys are staying in business sometimes too, but look at the upfront costs and expense, like anything would be with technology.

REP. HALL (7TH): And I thank you for that. I just wanted to, I’m concerned about making correlation between a rise in minimum wage with regard to increase in automation and I’m not sure that we have enough data to support that correlation. And so, thank you for your time this evening. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Representative Porter.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Just listenin, so many things are going through my head. It’s been a long day so I’m gonna try not to stumble. A lot has been said. I was a bartender for quite a few years. On good nights it was good, $300-$400 dollars in tips, okay. But when it was slow, it was bad. Tip-wages, not a big fan of that. If you know the history of it, you understand why I’m not a big fan of that. I don’t think that people should have to depend on tips to pay bills. It’s nice when you get ‘em and everybody doesn’t tip and it depends on where you work, is it a high end restaurant, is it a low end restaurant. Are the patrons people with lots of money or people livin paycheck to paycheck which they could tip you but they really can’t afford to tip you they can barely
afford the drink. So I mean there’s a lot of things that go into play when we talk about tip-wage workers and what they earn. So I just wanted to bring that clarity to it because it is lucrative on good night but out of the week-to-week, every night is not a good night. And I would like to think, and I’ll use an example, I love coffee, trying to give it up. I had given it up, session has me drinkin coffee again. I can remember, you know, I love Dunkin Donuts and I like good coffee and Starbucks is good coffee but I wouldn’t go to Starbucks, it’s not like I’m crazy, I’m not payin that much money for a cup of coffee. Then I found out, what Starbucks, what they do for their employees, the benefit package they offer, how they take care of their people, they invest in their workers and I said, you know what, I’m done with Dunkin. I didn’t get to drink as much coffee [laughs] as I had been drinkin but I switched over to Starbucks, it’s better coffee, I can’t afford to drink it the way I was Dunkin’s but I feel good about spending my dollars at Starbucks because I know what Starbucks is doing for their workers and I would hope that the people that are coming in the restaurants, as Representative Polletta shared with us, you know, I’m like that as well, I like live people and this is the problem I have with the big box companies because I will literally stand in line or either put the stuff down and walk out the store before I use a self-checkout and that’s greed. Because you’re right automation is quite costly and they would rather put their money in automation and excuse my phrasing but them people, a little of nothing to keep them in poverty so they can make an even bigger profit. So I hear what you sayin about small business but if we hadn’t waited so long to do this,
and ask to sweat it out again, we’re never gonna fix the problem if we keep kicking the can down the road and that’s what were being asked to do. So I’m sayin to you what I’ve said to the other folks that have come before us with the same argument, it has to be a shared sacrifice, we’ve asked a lot of people to do more with less and families have been doing more with less and some of ‘em haven’t. I know some real bad stories around people that are working 60 hours of the week and they’re not here with us no more. They passed on and I think that is really sad, it’s detrimental what we are doing the majority of the workers, honest working, hard working people, some of the hardest most honest people I know and they have to borrow money or be on state assistance and I don’t think that’s right. That’s humiliation to the tenth degree. We have to put dignity back at work and we have to fix what we’ve done and I do hear what your sayin and I hope, that you hear what I’m sayin.

SCOTT DOLCH: Sure, Representative Porter if you let me just, I just want to go back to one of your comments, about being a bartender and I just want to be clear with everybody here about tip-credit it does, I feel like it gets confusion, trust me, I’ve been trying to explain it to people but the good nights you had as a bartender, just I want everybody to be clear here, at $6.38 or $8.23 you walk in and that’s what you are being paid. You’re mandated to be, if you don’t receive a tip that night you are mandated to be paid minimum wage. So like anyone else back out there, you have to be paid that, so let’s not, and I know where that number is but yes, the good nights are good but you’re not being paid but I want to be clear that like if the
minimum wage goes up, even if it’s tip-credit state, the wage there, if it gets, you know, to $15 dollars at some point, they have to be paid $15 dollars, a server has to be paid $15 dollars. I think that gets lost and gets lost in this conversation because they have to, at the end of the day, it’s a state law they have to get to that point. They’re not, cause we look at our numbers and they run it for us, as we try to look at the server because it is a conversation we have about back of house and front of house in a restaurant but they are making $25 dollars to $35 dollars an hour but to say that when you have a slow night, you’re making under the minimum, it does not happen. So, and I just want to be clear that message, cause I feel for making sure that comment of having great nights but having also still knowing you’re going to make an expectation of a wage that is there. So I just want to be clear there too, Representative Porter.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Okay and two points on that. You were stressin the point that they were makin $25 dollars an hour. We had someone earlier stressin the point that they were makin $15 dollars to $20 dollars an hour. If you’re not having a good night, you’re making $10.10 and the second point it is the law but I’m here to tell you that we have people in this state that are breakin the law, that we have tip-wage earners that are not getting paid minimum wage when they don’t meet the mark, so that’s the other thing that I want to put on the record since you brought it up. It is the law, but we know that people break the law everyday and that is one of the laws being broken and I have people that come to me and have shared these stories. So yes, they are supposed to get paid minimum wage when they don’t
hit the benchmark but we have people workin in this state that are not gettin paid. So there were two reason, you know, I was makin a point just because you were sayin $25 dollars an hour sounds good. I know that sounds real good to the folks sittin in this room instead of makin $10.10 dollars an hour. So, yeah I wish I was making $25 dollars an hour too, but we’re not and by the time we figured it out, it was more like $2 dollars but that’s just the reason why I went there and she had.

SCOTT DOLCH: I appreciate it Representative Porter. I want you to know that, like you talked about these people, you hear other people that aren’t being paid, as an association we want to know that because that’s not the, we want to be protecting why we have that and that’s why I think having it, it allows, you know, it allows that flexibility to make the wages you do otherwise we say, hey you can make $18 dollars of $19 dollars but you’re not gonna get $28 dollars, you’re not gonna be at a restaurant which I just got numbers from last week that made $41 dollars an hour as a bartender in Hamden, okay. You’re not gonna do that, you’re gonna make $18 dollars, that flexibility. I saying some of the bartenders, like wait a minute I can’t, I work for that, that’s my livelihood so I want to be clear that is why we push for the tips side of that because it is the best part, like I’m not just speaking on behalf of restauranteurs I’m speaking on behalf of 155,000 employees that, you know, the industry of opportunity, allowing people the flexibility to go and work at a restaurant and make their hours and make, some of them make a really good living, and it’s amazing to watch and they earn their way up as well. Some of them own restaurants,
some of them now sit on our board and they can tell you stories of where they started. So I think that, I just want to be clear, that we’re not, just because some few you’re saying that aren’t paying it, I want to know that because I think I wouldn’t want to hurt and just get rid of it looking at that side of it because of a couple of the restaurants that are not doing it right, I want to know cause that shouldn’t be the case. That is not why we have it in place and why it was made in not only our state but the other 50, the other states that have a tip-credit and a server wage and a bartender wage, cause that is not something that we would promote in anyway, Representative Porter, so thank you again for sharing your story and I appreciate all the time. I’ve probably been up here way too long, so. I know it been a long day, so thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): It’s been a great dialogue, I don’t see it as time wasted. Thank you for your testimony. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Any other comments or questions? Okay, thank you very much.

SCOTT DOLCH: Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Next up we have Joelle Fishman.

JOELLE FISHMAN: Hi, good evening, Senator Kushner, Representative Porter and Members of the Labor Committee, I am sitting here remembering one year ago when on International Women’s Day the Labor Committee held a very special hearing on raising the minimum wage, paid family medical leave and pay equity and out of all of that pay equity passed last
year and now we need the minimum wage and family leave and public options this year.

My name is Joelle Fishman. I live in New Haven, I am speaking today on behalf of the Connecticut Communist Party. I want to begin by appreciating your leadership with the minimum wage bills you introduced as Labor Committee.

It is time that policy decisions start from the point of view of those affected. In this case, the 510,000 low wage workers in Connecticut, their communities and all communities because the future of Connecticut requires that we address the shameful and unsustainable inequality in our state. It is an outrage to expect low wage workers to subsidize corporate profits or even small business income. Raising the minimum wage and increasing purchasing power boosts the entire economy so it helps us all.

And I have three stories here to share, I think I took some extra time in the beginning, I’ll cut it two:

Carlie Delgado is a 22 year old graduate of Southern. He has a $50,000 student loan debt. All he could find was a parking lot attendant job at the hospital for $10.10 an hour. He can't save, he can't pay back the loan, and if he didn't live with his mom he would be homeless. And the message he send for me to say today was, "The Dream, work, get your education, do your part is not delivering what was promised." I’ll skip the next.

The third story is of a 55-year-old mom of six, a constituent of Representative Porter. She was a teacher in her home country. Here, she became a home care assistant for minimum wage and now she works at a child care center for less than $15
dollars an hour. She and her husband, who also has a job struggle daily on how to make ends meet.

And there are similar stories that we heard all through this day. I was so touched by the individual who said if you, if we get to $15 dollars in three years there is going to be homeless people left along the way between now and then. It is a story felt disproportionately in communities of color and by women who make up a majority of low wage workers.

And we know that Connecticut led the nation in 2014 when we raised the minimum wage to $10.10, over three years. We quickly felt behind as other states went further and the cost of living continued to climb while wages did not. So raising the minimum wage to $15 dollars now is really not a choice, it is an urgent necessity. And in terms of the details of that, I want to support the necessity of having the annual adjustment for inflation based on the Consumer Price Index or even possibly based on median wages.

There is a debate going on in Congress right now, I think the hearing was yesterday the Raise the Wage Act of 2019 and in that Bill they are planning to phase out all subminimal wages, subminimal wages for teens and tip-workers and so on and so forth. I think it’s a good idea, I think it should be looked at. We can phase out the training wage which is a subminimal minimum wage here in Connecticut while we’re looking at this issue.

If the federal minimum wage had kept pace with the increase in productivity over the last 50 years it would be over $20 dollars an hour today so that’s what we’re dealing with. The reality that happens
in takin care of and the $20 dollars is much closer to what a Connecticut family needs for basics.

We also support SB 764 to limit "on-call" scheduling imposed primarily on low wage workers and we all know that you can’t figure out to have an extra job, plan for childcare, or medical or any other necessities unless you know what your schedule is in advance. And all workers have the right to dignity and respect, that’s what we’re fighting for.

So, SB 2, HB 5004 and SB 764 are urgent steps to address the extreme inequality in our state and I believe it is an emergency. They are essential to raise us all up together and we can do no less. Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you and thank you for reminding us that tomorrow is International Women’s Day. We may be here until tomorrow, if we are I suggest that we all take a break and say Halleluiah, it’s the eighth of March and we’re celebrating. But thank you for your testimony and the remarks that you brought to us, I really appreciate it. Any comments?

REP. PORTER (94TH): Always great to see you Miss Joelle. I just want to say thank you. You have been a trooper today. You’ve been all day and now almost all night. But I’m hopeful that we’ll be done way before midnight.

JOELLE FISHMAN: Well it was an honor to participate today.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you. You have a good night.
SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Next we have Win Heimer. How you doing tonight, Win?

WIN HEIMER: Doin well. Good evening Senator Kushner, Representative Porter and Members of Committee. Thank you for this opportunity. My name is Win Heimer. I’m a resident of West Hartford and the Executive Vice President of the Connecticut Alliance for Retired Americans. The Alliance is the state affiliate of the National Alliance for Retired Americans and comprises 50,000 members in Connecticut.

We urge your support for SB 2, AN ACT INCREASING THE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE and HB 5004, also titled AN ACT INCREASING THE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE. We applaud that both bills call for gradually increasing the minimum wage to $15 dollars by 2022 and then indexing it to inflation. We also support SB 764, AN ACT PROHIBITING ON-CALL SHIFT SCHEDULING.

We believe that raising the minimum wage to $15 dollars an hour is a modest first necessary step up towards a bare minimum that can bolster economic security for thousands of Connecticut workers. It should be indexed to inflation with the CPI and phased in as soon as possible. Contrary to popular misconceptions, those who would benefit the most from a $15 minimum wage would be adult women who work full-time. According to the Connecticut AFL-CIO, a single adult would need to work 75.5 hours per week in order to make a living wage working at the current $10.10 per hour.

The Alliance for Retired Americans notes that paying people higher wages for their work means more than just a bigger a check for those workers and their families today. Those higher wages mean increased
Social Security benefits for workers when they retire. Higher wages would also strengthen the Social Security trust fund for future generations, since those who earn more pay more into Social Security.

As the Connecticut AFL-CIO rightly observes: “Today, a full-time worker in Connecticut has to make at least $24.47 an hour just to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment. At $10.10 an hour, our state’s minimum wage simply isn’t enough to support a lone adult, let alone a family.”

Raising the minimum wage to $15 dollars an hour is long overdue. Our neighboring states of New York and Massachusetts are doing it. Other states in the region are considering it. We must raise the minimum wage to stay competitive in our region and attract and retain workers in Connecticut.

We urge you to get it done here during the current legislative session.

Additionally, we support SB 764, AN ACT PROHIBITING ON-CALL SHIFT SCHEDULING which would help stabilize working families by limiting on-call scheduling for thousands of Connecticut low-wage workers with unpredictable work schedules. Limiting on-call shift scheduling will stabilize working families, helping to make them more financially independent, help the economy, and make our state more competitive regionally. Thank you for your consideration.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you, I’m very glad that you are here to testify particularly because we had some testimony earlier today by somebody who
seemed like a really great guy and he was concerned about the impact of raising the minimum wage would force up costs, he was a grocer I believe that talked about that and that would harm senior citizens and I wonder, you know, it’s great to have a representative of seniors here tonight testifying about, in support of this and I wondered if you had any thoughts on that.

WIN HEIMER: Well it may affect some folks but I think overall, particularly those who, my constituents are really retired union members and for the most part and they are doing fairly well. We would like to have everybody raised to that level so to the extent that seniors can, you know, weather the storm, and also the extent that people can earn $15 dollars and help stabilize the family I think is to their benefit.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Yeah, I also appreciate what you said about that I hadn’t made the connection that if we raise wages, we also stabilize Social Security and I think that’s a point that had not been made yet today.

WIN HEIMER: It’s a generational thing.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I appreciate that. I do think, you know I was sensitive to his remarks though and what I said earlier was it really concerns me that we seem to be saying we can’t afford to pay more for this group of people because it will hurt this other poor group of people and, you know, somehow that doesn’t make sense to me. I know that one of the things that we’re looking at to is how do we provide discounted prescription drugs and things like that, that would help particularly seniors. I know that the seniors in the district
that I live in that I spoke to were really concerned about a lot of the quality of life issues that we’re trying to address this session and, you know, I think that most of them would also agree that we need to increase the minimum wage. So thank you for your testimony. Any other comments or questions? Thank you so much.

WIN HEIMER: Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Next we have Taylor Biniarz. She is here. Hello, Taylor. Thank you for being here all day.

TAYLOR BINIARZ: No problem, I wasn’t here all day, I arrived a little later. Members of the Committee my name is Taylor Biniarz and I live in Hartford, Connecticut. I work a job making and selling products in a manufacturing/beverage service industry. I stand in support of SB 764 AN ACT PROHIBITING ON-CALL SHIFT SCHEDULING."

I'd like to point out that this bill would not actually prohibit the practice of on-call scheduling. Rather, this bill will help stabilize working families by "limiting" on-call scheduling.

When I worked there I was given two types of schedules. I was either told my schedule at the beginning of the week or I was told about the next day on the present day. Both of those schedules consistently changed. I was often either told I wasn’t needed on said day or cut early into one day but then also was called in on days I wasn’t scheduled. I felt like I couldn't say no because early on I was asked to and when I stated in the group chat that I had plans, my plans were
questioned harshly by a coworker who happened to the owners son.

When I was told I didn't have to come in on the next day I felt like I could not make plans, or even sleep in just in case I was called in especially due to my close proximity to the location. I drove to work and found out I wasn't needed many times. I was scared every time I had to leave early or come in late due to my therapy, which I always let them know well in advance. My mental health suffered and I had to call out sometimes because of my mental health getting worse, causing my lack of sleep, and affecting my physical health as well.

I received several overdraft fees due to automatic bills being taken out of my account due to some of my hours being shorter than expected which coupled with the fact that I wasn’t making a living wage made it worse. My partner and I faced financial hardships because I could not always get rent money to him on time. If I had to cancel a therapy appointment then I would have had a $75 dollar fee each time.

This bill would have helped me by being more financially consistent but it would have also helped my mental health more, by not making it decrease significantly. I do not have children but I cannot imagine working this job or any on call job if I did. If there a business that cannot treat their employees with respect and dignity then they should not be allowed to be one anymore.

I strongly support SB764. I hope this Committee and Connecticut lawmakers will vote favorably this year to empower Connecticut's hourly workers not only by limiting abusive scheduling practices, but also by
raising the minimum wage, because one reform alone does not silence the pain and hardships addressed by the other.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you so much for your testimony. Do we have any comments or questions? You articulated very well. I am repeating what Robyn is saying next to me, you did a good job articulating. I do think, you know, I’ve worked negotiating contracts with business that have part-time employment and need to have that in order to sustain the business and even, you know, against some resistance we were able to accomplish some of the things that are in this Bill through collective bargaining and it made a huge difference for the workers, so you know, I’ve heard a lot about the issues that you raised about being afraid to refuse a shift, having to go to work and find out you didn’t have any hours, these are things that happen far too often and I hope that through Bills like 764 we can address some of these problems and make the work place friendlier for people who, who are doing a valuable service for the business. So, Thank you so much.

TAYLOR BINIARZ: Thank you for your time.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Next up we have Dominique Torok. You know when you get to the second page of testimony, had it’s ten of nine and people are still here, it’s very heartening, so thank you. Thank you for hanging in there.

DOMINIQUE TOROK: Thank you for this opportunity to testify this evening. My name is Dominique Torok. I’m a graduate student at UConn School of Social Work, I am majoring in community organizing that I am working with the Intergenerational Alliance here
in Connecticut. We are calling for your support of SB 2, HB 5004 and SB 764.

I sat here for awhile today and decided to rewrite my testimony after being inspired by many of the people in this room. So I’ve decided to paint a picture for all of you and I will do my best to be brief because I know we’ve all had a long day.

I grew up in Naugatuck and I come from a working class family. My dad is a mechanic and step-mom is self-employed as an accountant and she does a lot of bookwork for small business owners. I have three brothers and we range from 10 to 35. I stated working at the age of 16 and I’ve worked in retail, in restaurants, as a home health aide, in a powder coating company, as an early childhood provider and as a CAN. In these various job I was often expect to clopen and at various times I was also called out of work unexpectedly. At all those jobs I was paid minimum wage. All of those jobs also kept me just under 40 hours so I only qualified as part-time and one of those jobs I was gracious enough to be able to work at seasonably for multiple years because my first employer hired me back every single season.

The minimum wage worked when I with my family but when I moved out a 19 that wage didn’t work. It wasn’t enough to pay my bills, it wasn’t enough to allow me to go to college without incurring massive amounts of debt. When I graduate that will upwards of $58,000 dollars’ worth of debt. One other point I wanted to make as someone who currently works with seniors and has for a longtime, is that one of the best things we can provide to our seniors is the piece of mind that their children and their grandchildren are going to be taken care of. I
believe that raising the minimum wage in addition to many of the other previously mentioned polices by Mattie in her testimony and Renee as well would seek to do this and work well for Connecticut families to thrive.

I shared this story with you today partly because my other testimony felt very dry at this hour and also because I wanted to paint a picture of the lives of numerous individuals in this State. I am very grateful for the opportunities that I’ve had to work here over the last 10 years and that I’ve been privileged enough to meet a variety of individuals, some of which were coworkers, others were my patients and some were my students. Those individuals push me to become who I am and the reason why I am here today, they continue to inspire my work as an advocate and I am hopeful that this Committee will work collaboratively to do what’s best for Connecticut working families. Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you Dominique. Questions or comments? Representative Porter.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Dominique we spoke earlier out there in the hallway so I just wanted to say thank you for hanging in there. I know it’s been a long day and I really do appreciate everything that brought to the fact that you gained enough information you were prompted to rewrite your testimony is very impressive. So thank you for putting that kind of thought and caring to your testimony and what you chose to share with this Committee tonight. Thank you.

DOMINIQUE TOROK: Thank you all for your time, honestly there is no place I rather be that here advocating for Connecticut families.
REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I do want to say that’s it good to hear you express these views so articularly and I think it helps to make us all cognizant of how important UConn is to our State because we have students like you graduate students enrolled at UConn that are doing so much, not just for the university community but for the whole State, so thank you.

DOMINIQUE TOROK: I’m so grateful cause I owe a lot to them.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thanks. Next up is Ann Pratt. Is Ann still around? I haven’t seen here for a while. Okay then we’ll go on to Elizabeth Fraiser.

ELIZABETH FRAISER: Good evening, Senator Kushner and Representative Porter and Members of the Committee. My name is Elizabeth Fraiser. I am the Policy Director with the Connecticut Association for Human Services Cause and we’re statewide non-profit that works to reduce poverty and promote economic success through both program and policy initiatives. We are here tonight to support the minimum wage Bills 5004, 7191 but I will speak on predictable scheduling SB 764.

As part of our mission to help families find pathways from poverty to economic success these types of scheduling practices that most effect low-wage workers place individuals in really a desperate work condition to take care of their families and both at home and through work. Financially unpredictable work scheduling is harmful the children and families of low wage workers who are
already under pressure to find enough hours to bring home a reliable paycheck. We know that without stable predictable scheduling parents struggle to make ends meet through part-time work and they are often unable to pursue additional part-time employment or employment in training that would actually allow them to move out of poverty.

In 2016 more than one in four Connecticut children lived in families were no parent had regular full-time employment. Hourly workers experience the financial strain associated with unpredictable scheduling may be forced to pay for the transportation and childcare costs upfront and the lose that money. I think you probably heard much of this tonight.

I’d like to just tell you a couple of stories from women I worked with in my past life. I worked in an adult ed center with mom’s that had not finished high school. They were in a program with going to school five days a week and their children were in care right in that facility. All of those moms and dads wanted to work, they all did work. They all found jobs. The problem was is that many of those jobs required them to come in during school hours even though time and time again we would send notes to those employers saying please allow them to not work during these hours. They have little children, they were often trying to parse them off with friends or neighbors in environments that may not even in some instances be safe because they needed to get to work. They tried to get second jobs because they wanted to make ends-meet in addition to going to school. They couldn’t make that work ever. In one case a mom, her little two-year-old who was diagnosed with autism and had appointments three or four days a week with different birth-to-three
providers. It was a choice of making those appointments or going to work.

You know, really for low income moms and dads life is really, really very difficult and I think we really need to think and put ourselves in other peoples shoes, in other peoples positions. And it’s been a long night but I just wanted to share that because I think of those young women all the time. So thank you very much.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you and thank you for sharing those stories, they resonate I actually have people in my district that have that very same story today. Those are the issues that they’re dealing with around the Bills that we’re presentin and we’re presentin these Bills because we have heard from the people in this state that this is what they want but more so this is what they need.

ELIZABETH FRAISER: You know, just one more point, I, it’s something has changed since I was a young woman. I needed to take a year off from school to save money to go to college, before I went to college and during that year I had a minimum wage job and I had predictable hours, I knew every week what my schedule was and something has changed and I’m not quite sure what that was. I was working in retail. It was not any different that today but I worked 40 hours a week and different days of the week some weeks but it seemed to work and I’m just not really sure how things have changed so much.

REP. PORTER (94TH): I’ll tell you what it is, I call it corporate greed. You know, we’ve allowed this thing, I call it runaway inequality, and that’s what really has been in impetuous for this huge gap, wealth gap that we see nationally, not just here in
the State of Connecticut and it’s time to rein folks back in and it’s a heavy lift and for good reason. The more money people make the more they want and that goes for everyone. I just think that we have to share the pot and that it should not be permitted for people to have astronomical profit when the people that helped to make that profit are livin in poverty. So thank you for sharing all those stories with us this evenin. And thank you for hanging in there.

ELIZABETH FRAISER: Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): You’re welcome. You have a good night. Next up we have Merrill Gay. Another trooper, thank you for hanging in there Merrill. The floor is yours.

MERRILL GAY: Thank you for still being here. Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, and Members of the Committee, my name is Merrill Gay and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance. The Alliance is a coalition of over a hundred organizations ranging from individual childcare programs to statewide advocacy organizations and we represent the full range of the people who care for, and about young children in this State.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 764 AN ACT PROHIBITING ON-CALL SHIFT SCHEDULING. You’ve heard from some small business owners who do the right things and give their workers schedules in advance. This bill isn't aimed at them. This bill is aimed at the bad actors who employ exploitative business practices like on call scheduling. Now that we all walk around with cell phones it is possible for employers to say, call in
a couple of hours before the shift and see if we need you. It’s possible, but it’s not right.

With the rise of this big data analytics, businesses are increasingly using predictive software and “On Call” scheduling to right size their labor force based on a host of factors ranging from the whether it’s raining, to social media buzz, to a new promotion. All of those things have practice of using this kind of software has grown in retail, foodservice and hospitality, all sectors that are dominated by big national players. The flip side of that growing ability of big businesses to achieve these new efficiencies in right sizing their labor costs is the toll that last minute scheduling takes on the employees and their children. When you don't know from day to day whether you are going to work you don’t know how much is going to be in your paycheck at the end of the week and whether you are going to be able to pay your bills.

You don’t know what your hours will be so that you could get a second job if you need a second job to make ends meet.

You can't go back to school to better your employment prospects.

You can't plan for formal child care. This forces many of these hourly employees to rely on unregulated informal care, and sometimes you can’t even do things as simple as being able to make a doctor’s appointment for your kid and know that you will be able to actually keep that appointment.

All of that contributes to stress on parents which is not good for children. Children can sense when their caregiver is stressed. It makes children
stressed too. In the earliest years of childhood that stress can actually change the brain chemistry and have long lasting impact on their health and learning. Since the Great Recession, Connecticut has largely replaced a lot of high wage jobs that we lost in the recession with lower wage hourly jobs. Many in the sectors that have embraced the practice of “on call” scheduling.

So who do those affect? It affects the working poor. The very same families that so many of you went to bat for when Care 4 Kids was closed to get that reopened. Among families with children under five, over a quarter of all working parents and over half of single working parents qualify for Care 4 Kids.

Now, not all of those parents are working hourly jobs nor do they all work in the sectors that have embraced on call scheduling, but many do. On call scheduling makes life for low income working families with young children unduly stressful.

When things get this far out of balance, it is time for government to step in and to set reasonable standards. The Early Childhood Alliance supports legislation that would focus on the sectors that are using On Call scheduling most aggressively specifically retain, food service and hospitality.

We want to make it clear that it should not cover sectors of the economy where there are licensing regulations that require staff to client ratios like childcare where we have to have two staff people if we got 20 kids in the classroom and we would be violating the law if we didn’t maintain that ratio.

Finally I just to point out a couple of things that got said by folks who were opposed to this, who,
some of the objections that they said that stuck me that they hadn’t actually read the Bill. People talked about things like, would I be able to call people into work an event for, you know a wake for instance and you start on line 69, “An employee shall not owe an employee pay pursuant to this subsection” and it says, oh actually I’m thinking about the weather stuff. What if, so you don’t owe money if there is severe weather conditions pose a threat to the employee safety. The question of could I call people in because I’ve got a special event, there’s nothing in this section that shall prohibit an employer from scheduling an employee for shift with less than 72 hours’ notice provided such scheduling is mutually agreed upon by the employee and the employer. That seems to me to be a pretty flexible thing here, this is not saying, no you can’t ever do it, as long as the employee has the opportunity to say, “no I don’t have childcare, I can’t come in, well no that’s when I’ve got class, I can’t come that day.” Employees have to have the, not only the legal right but also the protection that they can say no without being retaliated against. That is really important. Folks want to work folks, the big issue with lots of low-income workers is they are not getting enough hours and what they really want is a fulltime job but they are trying to piece together two part-time jobs, one of them with irregular hours that just causes ongoing problems. So, we applaud your efforts to bring this Bill forward this year. We hope this is the year that it passes. Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): We’re just tryin to figure out who’s chairing. I stepped out for a moment but thank you for your testimony. And I do think that
the challenge for a lot of workers who are subject to the on-call scheduling is that they are working for more than one employer so childcare is certainly an issue or going to school but I think what also happens is they got to end up picking between which job they are gonna give up because they got a last minute call and that does put them in double jeopardy because they could lose both and that’s, I think very difficult for people. I appreciate your testimony on that in particular pointing that out to us. Any questions? Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman. I do know it’s getting late I just wanted to point out that I did read the Bill and I do know the difference between severe weather and a weather event that may impact the business, so maybe you could help me trying to draft some better language than severe weather, if you have a moment maybe tomorrow or the next day.

MERRILL GAY: Okay.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Any questions or comments? Thank you so much. Next on the list we have Ray Favreau.

RAY FAVREAU: Good evening, everybody. Chairs Senator Kushner, Representative Porter and all Ranking and Distinguished Member of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Ray Favreau. I am the Legislative Committee Chair, and past president of the Connecticut Recreation and Parks Association, Inc. We have over 700 members representing 77 percent of the 169 communities in the State of Connecticut and I am also the Director
of Parks and Recreation for the Town of South Windsor in my 33rd year of service to that great community.

I am here representing CRPA on three minimum wage Bills, Senate Bill 2, House Bill 5004 and House Bill 7191 and also to express our concern with Committee Bill 764, AN ACT PROHIBITING THE ON-CALL SHIFT SCHEDULING. For the record, CRPA firmly opposes SB 2, HB 5004 and HB 7191 and we likewise oppose Bill 764 as written and we respectfully ask the Committee to consider including municipality owned and operated concession operations as an exemption listed in Lines 18 and 19 of the Proposed Bill.

But what I really would like to do is spend a few minutes focusing on minimum wage if I could, maybe try to illustrate a different side of the story and maybe give a little bit more information for this evening.

We feel that the proposed incremental increase of nearly 50 percent over the next four to five years has detrimental effects on municipalities from rural to urban. We feel it is yet another unfunded state mandate that will hinder municipalities ability

The vast majority of our employees are seasonal, ages 15 to 23, students that are coming to work for us to supplement their education so that they can move from a learning wage with us and move on to a truly living wage as a fulltime employee after they get out of school. But the increased doesn’t just affect the entry level. The wage compression that’s created by the new minimum wage does create a tremendous trickle-up or dominion effect because the proportional wages that we have to pay current staff that are either returnees, Veterans or have
supervisory responsibilities will also have to be adjusted in an upward flow.

In my community alone I am looking at a $400,000 dollar increase in labor costs when we get to $15 dollars an hour. This is added costs that will be passed on to our residents.

I would like to echo Mr. Francis from the amusement part industry who spoke earlier and he was talking about training grounds for his employees. I would agree but it is not training grounds for specific skill it is actually developing our future fulltime employees for industries all across all phases and we take that job very seriously. In South Windsor Parks and Recreation is the largest summer employer in the town. We are a people industry and we need people to deal with people, their emotional, social and physical needs.

Vendors that we do business with will undoubtedly be raising their prices to us for buying those products and services so they can meet their labor cost increases. Again added unpredictable costs that will be passed on to our residents.

Many communities throughout Connecticut are experiencing difficulty in maintaining programs and services with shrinking state aid, additional increasing unfunded mandates, proposed new sales taxes on things like day camps and swim lessons, tolls, predictive scheduling, and the existing required budget cap of 2.5 percent. This bill, if passed, squeezes even more blood out of the stone. To add on to what Senator Miner commented on earlier and Representative Polletta expressed some concerns, the cumulative affect or impact of these unfunded mandates and additional financial liabilities again
will be passed on to our residents and it will be unsustainable.

My colleagues and I are in the parks & recreation are here to promote, deliver and positively affect the health and well-being of our constituents. We also need to be affordable, frugal, and accessible.

We appreciate, we seriously appreciate he intent of the Bills, but we are fearful of the detrimental impact implementation will have on parks & recreation departments state-wide. We are concerned it will limit affordable access to our programs, especially before and after school programs, childcare programs, learn-to-swim programs, as a result of the necessary increase in user fees to support them. We are concerned it will undoubtedly cause a reduction in services to our residents. We are concerned that it will limit funding that is available for financial assistance and scholarships to accommodate everybody regardless of their economic situation. We are concerned that it will decrease our capacity to employ. We are concerned it will limit our ability to maintain our parks and facilities and most importantly we’re concerned that if it truly is the antithesis of combatting childhood obesity, opioid crisis and other health related medical conditions that are exacerbated by inactivity. For all these reasons, CRPA asks you to strongly consider voting no on SB 2, HB 5004, and HB 7191. We want to continue the mission of preserving and protecting affordable, quality of life services that our parks & recreation profession is dedicated to providing and our residents deserve.

That concludes my testimony and I’d be happy to take questions.
SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Comments or questions? Representative Porter.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Through you, Madam Chair and thank you for your testimony. I just want to ask a couple of the same questions that Representative Hall asked of another small business. When we went from the old wage to $10.10 was it the same concerns that you had then that you have now?

RAY FAVREAU: No.

REP. PORTER (94TH): They weren’t?

RAY FAVREAU: No.

REP. PORTER (94TH): And how, I’m sorry.

RAY FAVREAU: We actually supported.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Okay and why did you support it then and you are not supportin it now?

RAY FAVREAU: It is the level of the increase. It is far more dramatic. It was a much smaller increase back in 2017 when we capped it out to $10.10 it was a 30 cents, 40 cents a year for three years and we could manage that. We had enough time to be able to predict how to budget and plan accordingly and it was a smaller impact. This one is fairly substantial, you know, you’re talking $4.90 pretty quickly and that’s a large percentage, it is almost a 50 percent increase in those three years, four years.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you. And how much of your budget is payroll?

RAY FAVREAU: About 80 percent.
REP. PORTER (94TH): Eighty? Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I just wanted to ask you about the number of employees that you have in Windsor. It was Windsor you said, right?

RAY FAVREAU: South Windsor, close enough. Right across the river.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): How many employees?

RAY FAVREAU: I have over 200 during the course of the year. In the summer I have about 130.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Is that 130 in the summer and the remainder?

RAY FAVREAU: The rest of the year, that is correct? Total year annual employment about 200 employees.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): And do these 200 employees generally made minimum wage?

RAY FAVREAU: Many do, some don’t. I have a very, very good return rate.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Do you have a sense of how many are at minimum wage?

RAY FAVREAU: It’s just under 50 percent.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): And in South Windsor the community itself, do you know if you have many residents that, I’m not talking about the people that work in your program, but many residents who earn minimum wage in the City of, in the Town of South Windsor?

RAY FAVREAU: There are some, yes.
SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Do you have any sense of how many?

RAY FAVREAU: No, I don’t. The Human Service Division in my town takes care of that including our financial assistance.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): There has been a lot of discussion about the ALICE study that was done by United Way are you familiar with that? And have you looked at that in terms of South Windsor and where you fall in terms of the ALICE study?

RAY FAVREAU: It’s minor in South Windsor but I just want to remind you that I am not just representing the Town of South Windsor, I am representing 169 communities that have municipal parks and recreation departments so a City of Bridgeport, we’re concerned about the City of Bridgeport being able to sustain this or New Haven and then small, small towns in rural areas that are so small and have one person departments so it’s not just about a suburban Town like South Windsor, so it’s much more broader than that.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I completely understood that from your testimony but I was interested in asking about your specific Town because I thought you would be really familiar with that and it would help us have an understanding of what your town is facing. You also said that, you referenced your town so I went in that direction. So your answer to the question was that you don’t have a lot of residents, that you’re not one of those towns that’s very, got a large percentage of ALICE classified residents?
RAY FAVREAU: No, my particular Town would have a small percentage that is correct.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Okay, that’s what I was curious about. Any other comments or questions? Okay, thank you very much.

RAY FAVREAU: Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Johelis Reyes. Did I say your name correctly? [Speaking Spanish]

JOHELIS REYES: Uno momento.


JOHELIS REYES: Buenas noches. Gracia para oportunidad.

TRASLATOR: Good evening, thank you for the opportunity.

JOHELIS REYES: Me nombre is Johelis Reyes.

INTERPRETER: My name is Johelis Reyes.

JOHELIS REYES: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: I am a provider of healthcare since 2007

JOHELIS REYES: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: In all these years that I’ve been taking care of children I have been making sure I’ve been trained, working hard and educated myself to make sure I’m education these children correctly.

JOHELIS REYES: Speaking Spanish.
INTERPRETER: I consider that our role as providers an extremely important role and that we are molding and shaping our children’s lives.

JOHELIS REYES: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: And because of all the work that we put in and the dedication that we put in, it is very important that we deserve a living wage for the time that we have with these children.

JOHELIS REYES: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: Our work has much value and as of now we not getting the recognition in payment that we deserve.

JOHELIS REYES: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: For example, right now the minimal salary here in Connecticut is $10.10 and us, those who are taking care of your children, bringing them security, love and teaching them how to be a smarter, brighter future we only get paid $4.87 by an hour.

JOHELIS REYES: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: With each child that is an infant, we need to make sure that we are giving them extra care, we are personalizing that care and dedicating more time to make sure that small infant has every need covered.

JOHELIS REYES: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: As of now the state subsidy Care 4 Kids pays us $219 dollars weekly for infants. If you divide that into five days that is $43.80 and if you divide that into hours, of course it goes back
to the $4.87 cents. Each child that we take care of is not only just an eight hour day, you’re looking at 10 to 12 hours and $4.87 cents an hour is not just and it’s definitely not enough to cover our needs. As providers who take care of small infants we need the opportunity to live with dignity, the opportunity to make sure that people are valuing our time while we do the hard work, responsibility and dedication of caring for a child. Thank you.

JOHELIS REYES: Thank you. Muchas Gracias.


REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you for coming in tonight. I appreciate your testimony and I definitely admire your commitment to the children. I mean they’re the future and I know that you’re not gettin paid what you should get paid, but we’re workin on that and I’m very hopeful that this is the year that we get it done for you so we can give you back the dignity that you deserve in the very precious work that you’re doing.

INTERPRETER: Speaking Spanish.

JOHELIS REYES: Ay, muchas gracias. Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: Thank you, you know because you’re a mother.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, have a good night.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Actually you are dealing with two grandmothers, we’re not just mothers, we’re grandmothers. [Laughter] Quatro nietos. Gracias.

JACQUELINE ULLUA: Buenas nochas.

INTERPRETER: Good evening.

JACQUELINE ULLUA: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: First and foremost I want to take all of you on the Committee for giving us the opportunity to express our opinion and making sure that we have the time to discuss important issues.

JACQUELINE ULLUA: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: My name is Jacqueline Ullua and like my counterpart who just spoke, I am also a childcare provider from the City of Waterbury. I’ve been providing care for many years and like my counterpart I want to make sure that you understand that we take a lot of time and dedication to educate these young children. We are creating and molding their futures.

JACQUELINE ULLUA: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: One top issues that I want to make sure that we get across here tonight is the pay with Care 4 Kids, the cost of the subsidy reimbursement rate. When it comes to Care 4 Kids we process all the paperwork and these parents depend on the subsidy so we also depend on the pay. When it comes delayed, that pay not only doesn’t enable us to do our job because we’re not getting paid for the services that are rendered but also puts into jeopardy the care of the child and if they are going to be in our care.

JACQUELINE ULLUA: Speaking Spanish.
INTERPRETER: I’ve always said that when you care for children it is almost like when you care in medical situations that you have to do it, those people in the medical profession and people in the educational profession have to do it with passion and love.

JACQUELINE ULLUA: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: And love for the children.

JACQUELINE ULLUA: Gracias.

INTERPRETER: Thank you. Thank you for your time.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. I have been hearing about the delay in payments for Care 2 Kids, ah Care 4 Kids and I am aware that is being an effort made now to catch up on a very big backlog. We heard testimony about that or a presentation on that just yesterday. So I am hopeful that we will see some improvement in that area because I realize how much it impacts the families.

INTERPRETER: Speaking Spanish.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Other comments or questions? Oh, I’m sorry, please come back, I’m sorry. Representative Wilson Pheanious. I am very sorry, I am falling down on the job up here. My apologies.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): I just wanted to say to you and to the person that testified before, your testimony was beautifully written, I understood it very well and I’m just delighted that you’re, not that you’re not getting the pay that you’re getting but that you are doing the work that you’re doing because it is so important to children to have a really good start and have people who really care
about them, take care of them and it is so evident in your testimony, both of your testimonies that you are doing that and I just want to thank you. And thank you very much.

JACQUELINE ULLUA: Speaking Spanish.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Is Richard Grimes here? I know he was here earlier but I don’t see him in the room. Next we would have Maria Reyes.

MARIA REYES: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: Good evening. Thank you for allowing us to speak and for the invitation tonight.

MARIA REYES: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: I’ve been a provider for 13 years of early childhood.

MARIA REYES: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: And we always support the education of children.

MARIA REYES: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: That is the future of our country.

MARIA REYES: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: We are always professionals and we are vital presence for parents.

MARIA REYES: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: And despite the credentials we always receive the lowest pay.

MARIA REYES: Speaking Spanish.
INTERPRETER: And sadly not one benefit for healthcare.

MARIA REYES: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: In our culture the way that we are getting paid is.

MARIA REYES: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: Oh, in our culture the way we are getting paid is as if we don’t have value.

MARIA REYES: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: But every day we educate ourselves.

MARIA REYES: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: We have to value the small children that we care for.

MARIA REYES: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: Because of the care, because of the work the parents are taking to make sure that we are caring, because of the care that.

MARIA REYES: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: Because of the care and the time that it takes for the parents to take care of their household.

MARIA REYES: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: We are the support for early education.

MARIA REYES: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: And we give support to the parents.

MARIA REYES: Speaking Spanish.
INTERPRETER: We are educators, nurses, cooks, social workers, housekeepers, and that is why we deserve a livable wage.

MARIA REYES: Por favor, Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: Please, we ask of you, implore you to listen to us.

MARIA REYES: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: So protecting your children and we make that difference.

MARIA REYES: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: It is a privilege and a great responsibility.

MARIA REYES: Speaking Spanish.

INTERPRETER: And we’re proud of making sure that we are helping and working with these children.

MARIA REYES: Speaking Spanish. Gracias.

INTERPRETER: We deserve a livable wage with dignity. Thank you.


REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Yes, just a comment. Once again it just make me happy to hear you say the things that you are saying because childcare is so important. I know you know how important it is forming the citizens of tomorrow and when I hear you, the kind of care that you put into your work it makes me sad that you’re not being compensated. You
share that lack of compensation with teachers, with nurses, with many women who are underpaid in this society and I just wanted to thank you for your work and know that I understand how little it is and how much we want to change that, so thank you.

INTERPRETER: Speaking Spanish.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): You know, many, many I mentioned this earlier today and I don’t know if you were here, but many years ago I was organizing workers who provided childcare in Stamford, Connecticut and it was really a shock to me how little they were paid and one of things that always seemed so contradictory in our society and in our state is that we speak so much about the value of family and so much about the value of our children yet the people we entrust to take care of them and teach them, we really don’t value that in terms of how we pay people. And it is a serious problem in this country and I think it leads to, it really undermines what we are trying to accomplish so I hope that we will be able to raise the minimum wage and impact childcare providers across the state and so we do appreciate and value everything that you do. Thank you.

MARIA REYES: Speaking Spanish, si. [Laughter]

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Next up is Eva Bermuda Zimmerman. Are you going to do this in Spanish or English?

EVA ZIMMERMAN: You guys tested me because my phone died, it was all written so, it was much easier then
it was written and I was translating and then the phone died.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Well you did very, very well.

EVA ZIMMERMAN: Thank you for your patience and thank you again like my wonderful providers who are here for your time and spending many long hours hearing everyone in this room from different sides of the issue.

We are of course, I am here on behalf of CSCA SEIU. I represent childcare providers throughout the State of Connecticut. In our union CSCA has retirees. We have state employees, we have municipal employees but we also have childcare centers and we also have daycare providers. All together we are a happy family of over 25,000 people. But too often when it comes to early education like the providers mentioned, they are not getting paid adequately and when you are talking about the Fight for $15, you think about, sometimes, most people when they are in the room with us think about, oh, why should I pay someone $15 dollars for frying French fries. Well first everyone should have a livable wage despite frying a French fry or taking care of a child or being an educator or being an engineer.

Everyone should have that opportunity and sadly when it come to education a lot of the providers that we work day in and day out have the credentials up the wazoo. They have bachelor’s degrees, and CDAs, masters, they go through Federal Mandates, NIAC approval. There are not easy degrees. Despite that they are making $4.87 an hour. It is based regionally, it is not a fair system. Most of them depend on social subsidies like Care 4 Kids, most of
them are small business owners. They could be the
director of a center or they could be in the home
and at the end of the day they are impacted like
everyone else.

So, I’ll open it up to questions. My request here it
let them get paid, that is the most important thing
and there is so many people who are impacted. I
have my own story of working dead end jobs and
trying to figure that out, let’s not be the story
for our educators who are trying to form the future
for tomorrow. Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you so much for
reminding us of all the education that goes into
being in a position and to care for children and I
know as a State and as somebody who has had small
children and now I have grandchildren, you know, I
understand how important it is for these
requirements to make sure that folks are prepared
and are educated and are able to give, you know, the
quality of care that we demand and that we need in
this state. But it is important to remind us of how
much they put into the jobs so they can, you know,
be the best that they can be and we don’t recognize
that when it comes to the pay that we provide to
them. I know when I used to organize childcare
workers, my husband was fond of saying, “You know
what, there are two types of nursery workers, those
that take care of plants and those that take care of
kids” and unfortunately we often pay those who take
care of plants more than we pay those that take care
of kids and that is not to say that those are the
only ones digging up gardens and taking care of our
nursery’s aren’t important people as well and they
do, I think what you said at the very outset that
everyone deserves a living wage is absolutely accurate. Thank you.

EVA ZIMMERMAN: Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Any other comments or questions? Okay, next up we have David Kohn from Standard Oil. Is he here? Okay, then Naomi Mitchell. Naomi, thank you.

NAOMI MITCHELL: Good afternoon. I want to thank the Committee for inviting us here tonight and allowing me to speak. My name is Naomi Mitchell and I am a home licensed daycare provider. I’ve been providing care for over 30 years as a home daycare provider and with my own children.

I am here tonight to support SB 2 and HB 5004 so that the parents can continue to do what they do best for their children by earning a fair wage and a decent living. I love what I do. The parents, some of the parents are eligible for Care 4 Kids program but they don’t get a fair enough wage on the job to pay the copay. So when they don’t pay the copay, who’s left? The providers, because the providers is gonna have to find ways to cut, they are going to think of ways to make ends meet. They are not gonna put the kids out. So a fair living wage of $15 dollars an hour would help put parents in a better position to get hope for a livable wage.

If parents continue to be unable to pay what would they do with the kids to provide their daycare needs. Many of them have closed and are permanently out of business. Will the kids get care and early education they need? No. Will the parents be forced to leave them home with younger siblings? Yes who would never get the kind of responsibility
or education that they need or worse, would they be left alone, not to touch anything or answer the door or answer the phone until the parent returns home.

You can help change this. Please support SB 2, HB 5004 so that the parents can make a better wage to support themselves and their families. Thank you for the time.

REP. HALL (7TH): No, thank you so much Mr. Mitchell for coming out and testifying this evening. Any questions or comments from the Committee? Representative?

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Yes, I’m wondering how often is it just generally that the parent can’t make the copay and that you end up getting shortchanged?

NAOMI MITCHELL: I would say to the tune of five to ten thousand dollars a year.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Oh, and how much is the copay do you know?

NAOMI MITCHELL: It depends on the parents and most of the time it’s somewhere between $200 and $300 dollars a week, a month I mean.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Okay, that is a significant loss. Thank you very much.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you for coming out this evening. Next we have Samantha Hills. Samantha Hills? Next we have Ezra Kaprov. Good evening.

ERZA KAPROV. Good evening. My name is Ezra Kaprov. I live in Hartford. I was born to a working class family in North Carolina, the child of two
healthcare workers and I’ve spent most of my working life as a minimum wage worker.

Good evening Senator Kushner, Representative Porter and the Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Ezra Kaprov. I am a member of the Central Connecticut Chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America. We are the largest socialist organization in the State of Connecticut. We are a chapter of the largest national socialist organization in the United States since World War II.

We know that Connecticut is the richest state in the country as well as one of the most unequal places in America. We believe that the only way ordinary people can achieve genuine freedom is by building an organized multiracial working class capable of confronting the ruling class and developing collective power in the workplace and our communities and our state. We believe that all workers deserve a living wage and raising the minimum wage would have a positive impact on workers around the state particularly workers of color and women who are underrepresented, oh sorry, who are over represented in low wage work. Working families in Connecticut cannot afford to live on $10.10 an hour. The living wage which is the cost of a basic standard of living is currently $19.08 an hour for a single adult in 2019 and over $40.00 per hour for a single parent with two children. Raising the rate to even $15 dollars will make a tremendous difference for many workers in Connecticut.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I urge you to support workers in this state by passing SB 2 and HB 5004.
REP. HALL (7TH): No, thank you for coming out and staying around to share your testimony this evening. Are there any questions?

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and I would like to that you. I just wanted to make sure DSA stands for what?

ERZA KAPROV: DSA stands for the Democratic Socialists of America.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you.

REP. HALL (7TH): Any? Thank you for coming out.

JAMES BHANDARY-ALEXANDER: Good evening. My name is James Bhandary-Alexander. I am from New Haven Legal Assistance where I am staff attorney and I represent low wage workers. We represent low income people throughout New Haven County including in the Valley and in New Haven itself and some of the suburbs.

I am not going to deliver my prepared comments because it is a little too late for me, to say them intelligibly but I am here on Bill 989 which is Uber Driver Bill and I recognize that it is very late at night for what is a little bit of a change in topic but I do want to explain to you what it is briefly before the drivers themselves testify and of course what I really want you to do is talk to the drivers because they are ones that really know what they are talking about.

But what the Bill does in effect it creates the equivalent of a minimum wage for drivers. This is something that has passed in New York City and is being considered in other localities. It is the first time it has come up here and we do it in a way
that does not raise the question, begs the question of independent contractor status it’s something this Bill deliberately avoids wading into that and it is something that accomplishes this by essentially setting a cap on the amount that Uber and Lyft can take from drivers.

As we’ve talked a lot about small business and family businesses tonight, Uber and Lyft are not those things. The CEO of Uber reportedly makes $200 million dollars and the average Uber driver, by all estimates, makes less than $10 dollars an hour when you consider wear and tear on the vehicle, gas and other expenses. That is less than our current minimum wage so when we talk about raising the floor for all workers we need to raise the floor for these drivers. And I will just quickly say that I have had the pleasure of working with this Committee for quite a while even though this is a new generation, I was here when Senator Gomes was Co-Chair, Gary Winfield was Co-Chair, Peter Terczyk and others. I’ve talked to some of you before and I really respect the courtesy you’ve shown to everyone tonight. When I’ve appeared here I’ve been representing domestic workers, immigrant workers, low wage workers, people who, if they’re protected by the law they are barely protected by the law. People don’t think of Uber and Lyft drivers in the same category as domestic workers. They don’t think of them in the same category as people who are working in the back of the restaurant. But let me tell you, they don’t have a right to minimum wage, they don’t have a right to overtime, they don’t have workers’ compensation, they don’t have unemployment compensation. They don’t have any labor employment protections. So what we’re asking for is just
sliver, really of what a regular employee receives and that is the purpose of the Bill and why they are here tonight. And I am happy to take any questions. I would just note for the record that we did submit some amended language, it is not very much but I can go into it if you need me to.

REP. HALL (7TH): Are there any questions or comments from the Committee? Representative.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Yes, sir. I understand or maybe I don’t understand, maybe you can tell me whether or not the flexibility that drivers have and I certainly will ask them the same questions, the flexibility that they have allows them to be able, or is that a positive, the fact that they are able to do different shifts and earn when they want to earn?

JAMES BHANDARY-ALEXANDER: I think it is a positive affect of the work for sure. The context which I could have explained more clearly is that the pay for these drivers has gone down so if there is a chart you would just see a line going down, down, down, down. When the pay was higher which was when these companies were brining people in to this work based on the high pay they had real flexibility because, and in fact, many people left jobs, for example you could be an assistant manger or something like that making $28-$29, $30,000 thousand dollars you could work for Uber and Lyft and $40 or $50,000 dollars even. I mean not after expenses but you would be making a considerable amount of money and you would have that flexibility you referred to. Now the pay is so low, just recently cut again, which is why drivers are organizing in this State on this issue that there is no flexibility because they
need to work that 70 hours, they need to work the 80 hours, they need to work 100 hours. You will hear testimony from people who are honest to goodness working 80, 90, 100 hours a week for the equivalent of $10 dollars an hour. So in that situation they have lost that flexibility which absolutely would be a positive in any job.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Can you help me understand, saying the wages have gone down, what has caused that or just the availability of more people in the business or?

JAMES BHANDARY-ALEXANDER: The companies Uber and Lyft which are massive companies that actually can afford to run a loss. They unilaterally set the pay. There is no negotiation, there’s obviously no collective bargaining, there is no individual bargaining. They decide. So once you’re in the business, you have committed perhaps, you probably purchased, leased a vehicle, you’re probably dependent on that income and the pay goes down and you make it up by working more hours but, the simple answer to your question is Uber and Lyft unilaterally determine the pay.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Okay.

JAMES BHANDARY-ALEXANDER: And in Connecticut it is just those two companies and there are probably 15,000 to 20,000 drivers in Connecticut.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Thank you. Thank you very much.

REP. HALL (7TH): Are there any other questions? Thank you so much for coming out this evening.
JAMES BHANDARY-ALEXANDER: Thank you very much, appreciate it.

REP. HALL (7TH): Moses Dahn.

MOSES DAHN: Hello. I just wanted to say thank you for having me here and having the rest of my colleagues here with us.

I just want to say my name is Moses Dahn, and I live in New Haven with my wife and two sons, ages 2 years old and 4 weeks old. I am here to support this Bill, SB 989 because, me as a driver I have no rights. I have no protection from the State of Connecticut as an independent contractor. Which means that sitting right here, if I leave this seat I don’t know if I am going to be working for Uber or Lyft tomorrow.

I work fulltime for Uber and Lyft. I depend on this job.

But when I started I started a part-time driver. I was working for a biomedical equipment technician repairing medical equipment. I started working because my wife I needed extra money for babysitting for our two-year-old. So in that time, last year in April, I found out my wife was pregnant so I started to work constantly for Uber and Lyft doing part-time and working fulltime and my wife was working as well. And the pay was good when I started. The pay was very good. During the weekend I would make about $400-$500 dollars which would cover the babysitting and help my wife and I to save up a little bit of money for gas and other use.

In August we received an amendment from Uber and Lyft which works, like if you don’t agree to it, you cannot work for them. If you agree to it you get to
work and we have no choice but to agree to that amendment that we have to approve ourselves.

So the reason of being here is the flexibility. So I left my job because my wife needed help with our four-year-old. We both are losing money because she had to leave work to go to doctor’s appointments and I have to work and after work I have to Lyft and Uber. I have to leave one job cause August the pay rate changes with Lyft and Uber. The pay rate changed went down. Before we were getting paid more on the mileage that we drive, the riders all the time and we were getting more money back then, now we are not making any money. The percentage taken out is more than what we are receiving and we cannot talk against that because if we say something they can kick us out because they are not being fair with us.

So the second baby is a major reason that I started driving for Uber and Lyft. Now I work about, I drive about 100 hours a week just to make about $1100 or $1200 dollars a week to be able to provide for my wife and two boys. Every week that I leave the house at three in the morning, I return at six, seven or eight at night. Driving so many hours makes it difficult for me to spend time with my family.

Being away from my wife and young children is very hard but I do it every day because, not because I want to drive but I love doing what I do right now. I am able to provide for my family and I am able to wake-up and help other people get to where they need to get on time. I am very happy as an Uber driver, I’m happy to drive for Uber and Lyft and those companies, I am not going to sit here and bash them
but all I’m here for is protection. I am here to be, I want to be protected as a resident of this State and a resident of New Haven. The State believing us working, in believing us and also believing the State to protect us.

REP. HALL (7TH): Absolutely.

MOSES DAHN: So that’s why I’m here.

REP. HALL (7TH): And we want to thank you for coming out this evening and staying all day. I know you guys have been here all night and all day. Just a quick question. So the amendment that you received last August from Uber and Lyft is that something that you could provide the Committee as far as what that change was?

MOSES DAHN: When you agree to the terms, it disappears, you cannot go back to it. It disappeared automatically, it’s like an App and you just read through it, you agree to all the terms and it’s gone. I could try to get it, but.

REP. HALL (7TH): I mean it would just be helpful information for us to understand what the change was because clearly that is what caused you guys or may have caused you guys to organize and just try and wrap our minds around what that change was would be helpful for the Committee to consider as we move forward, if that’s possible. Thank you. Anybody else have any questions? Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): This whole technology business has been a bit of a mystery to me. This year we’re dealing with Rover which I think is a similar platform and so I’m trying to put the 100 hours kind of in perspective. Is that 100 hours of you behind the wheel?
MOSES DAHN: It is 100 hours, yes. Waiting for ride because you have to be online to get a ride. So you cannot just turn off your App, you have to be online. So that 100 hours includes being online and driving people. So I’d like to say I work in New Haven and New Haven County and sometimes Fairfield and Hartford. So I would sit in the neighborhood and wait for people that need a ride to get to the airport, to get to the train station, to get to the bus station. So I would sit there and wait for indefinite hours, that’s how I get 100s here. So it’s behind the wheel, yes.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): And through you, Mr. Chairman. So do either Uber of Lyft require you to be in the vehicle when you’re waiting?

MOSES DAHN: They require you App, your App that is on your phone to be on. So for your App to be on you have to be in a vehicle because when you get a ride you have to be able to get to the rider on time and pick him up on time and drop them off on time. Cause Uber give them an estimated time that you, the driver will take from point A to point B. So if Uber is saying from where you at right now and where I’m at is gonna take two minutes, you’re expecting me to be there in two minutes. So I have to be where you’re at in two minutes to pick you up and Uber also told them when I start the trip, your destination where you are going is, if you’re going to New York City from Hartford to New York City it’s about three hours, three hours and a half so Uber would tell them you are gonna get to New York City within three hours or three hours and a half, if there some traffic or there’s no traffic. With that time I can leave from here to you to pick you up, I have to do that within time just so you can’t get
late. So I have to keep the App on, I have to be on time, everything we do as an Uber driver is on based on time, time, time.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): So through you, Mr. Chairman. One of the things that I had heard initially was at least an advantage of this type of opportunity was that you could choose if you wanted to be online or not be online and so if I think about Litchfield County which is where I live, are you telling me that an Uber driver in Litchfield County is actually sitting in his or her car waiting to see if they’re gonna get a trip?

MOSES DAHN: Yes, if your App is not on you get no trips. You have to turn on your App to get a trip, yes.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): So through you, Mr. Chairman. I understand you have to have your App on, I’m trying to wrap my head around the fact that you’ve got to sit in five degree weather in order to have you App on.

MOSES DAHN: Yes, we have our car on. We turn our car and turn the heat on so we can stay warm and wait for a ride and so we have to be in the car because you have to be ready and on time, Uber don’t want to lose a ride. And you, yourself the driver, you don’t want to lose a ride because it’s a ride you’ve been waiting for, for so long, so whenever a ride comes in you want to like get to that person and pick ‘em up and let ‘em or call ‘em up and let them know, yes I’m on my way and I’ll be there in a certain amount of time and I’ll pick em up. Yes you have to be within the car.
SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My last question is do you only drive for Uber or do you drive for both?

MOSES DAHN: I drive for both.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): And can you be online with both of those at the same time?

MOSES DAHN: Yes.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you, sir. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I haven’t used Uber very much but I’ve used Uber a little and I think one of the things that I’d experienced is that there is often more than one driver out there looking to pick up a fare and so if you don’t respond timely you’ll lose the fare to someone else as well.

MOSES DAHN: Yes, when the ride comes to your phone, if you don’t accept the ride, the ride goes away to the next driver that is closer to the rider. It’s always who’s closer to the who the rider is gonna go to the first. If the person does not accept the ride it goes to the next person closer to you that could be there to pick you up on time.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): So if you were in the house having dinner for instance and not in your car when a ride came through and you responded that you were gonna take that, you probably wouldn’t have time to get out the door and in your car because they’re already calculating your distance from the fare that you’re gonna pick up.

MOSES DAHN: Yes. So if you’re in your house having dinner and you left your App on and a call comes in,
if you see it you pick it up and you can get to the rider on time like whatever the App said, cause the App tells you how long it’s gonna take you to get to the rider. So the App says it seven minutes, you're having dinner with your family and you accept the ride, and the App says you have to get to that person within seven minutes so have to get to that person in seven minutes or the person also has the right to cancel the ride if you took to long. You can cancel the ride and request another ride and Uber will send it to the person closer to you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): So in terms of working for Uber or Lyft do they keep track, and you may have testified to this and I’m sorry cause I was out for a moment, but do they keep track of the number of rides you pick up or how many times you’re last or, I mean can they drop you as a driver also?

MOSES DAHN: They keep track of everything, yes. They keep track of dropping for how many times you have been late on a ride, I don’t know, I don’t think so. But I can guarantee you that every driver has always been on time. If there is a traffic us driver will call the rider and let ‘em know that there is traffic, that we are doing our best to get to you, to let you know what’s happening because it’s good to have that communication going.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I know the times that I have used it, when I’ve been in other cities, it used to be that we could hail a cab on the street but now there are fewer and fewer cabs and more and more Uber and Lyft drivers so I think there is a change going on that in some ways is very convenient for people who are looking for a ride but it also has its problems when it is a little bit unclear
sometimes whether or not you are going to be able to get a driver and I think that makes me a little nervous about it, I know I had to go pick up my daughter in the middle of night one night because there weren’t enough drivers out there and she needed ride and counted on getting an Uber driver. So I know that happens to but as far as the work goes and I think Senator Miner, your questions about not being familiar with the platform, to what extent do you have drivers in the more rural areas of our state?

MOSES DAHN: Well certain areas don’t have a lot of drivers. The city areas have a lot of drivers. Like Hartford has drivers but not a lot of drivers because Hartford is bigger and they get paid less as compared to the rest of the state, they get paid less on the mileage. Hartford drivers get paid the lowest, New Haven, Stamford and New London they get paid a lot so they have more drivers. Drivers that live in Hartford probably go down to work in Redding because there is more, they get paid more in that area and most of the time, I mean these cities they don’t have drivers there because the people that live in that area, you know, they don’t want to drive for Uber or Lyft so if drivers within Hartford, if a ride comes in Hartford, if the ride comes from West Hartford, the drivers have to leave from Hartford to West Hartford to drive them because people in West Hartford do not drive for Lyft and Uber because it’s probably considered to be, if I’m not mistake it would the city and East Hartford and Windsor so these drivers, like lets say in Hartford area because they can, that’s where the poverty level is more as compared to East Hartford and West Hartford so that’s why most of the areas don’t have
enough drivers because of the poverty level because people in West Hartford, Greenwich would not want to drive for Uber or Lyft. But people in New Haven, like me, like other drivers in Hartford, like other drivers in certain parts of Stamford we don’t make enough will always drive for Lyft and Uber because we want to make enough so we can take care of our family.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. I know that I am going to have more questions about this but for the moment you’ve done a good job in answering these questions. I know that what your facing it is a new form of transportation that is being used very heavily in our State and around the country and around the world actually and so I think we are having the kind of growing pains of not really understanding the industry as well as we need to in order to regulate it. But I do believe that regulation of this industry is very important and I’m not sure we realized that when it started, it seemed like a fad or something for young people but I am aware that now it is the way of the world and we’re gonna have to figure out how do we make sure that riders are safe, that drivers get paid a decent wage and that these companies that I believe are quite wealthy and I think they are making a huge amount of money, you know, we have to understand how is that wealth being produced and is it fair and are people being treated fairly on both ends, both the customer and the driver, so I thin you’re raising some really important concerns and I must say I know I personally feel like I wanted to hear your testimony because I felt very unprepared to really not understanding well enough this very new industry and we need to make sure we’re getting educated on
it and really figuring it out quickly because it is a big industry now. Thank you.

REP. HALL (7TH): Any other questions or comments from the Committee? No. Thank you for coming out this evening. Next up we have Guillermo Estrella.

GUILLERMO ESTRELLA: Good evening everyone. I want to read my testimony. My name is Guillermo Estrella. I live in Branford with my wife and my son. We’re expecting another baby soon. I’ve lived there for three years. I started driving with Uber back in December 2016 and with Lyft in January of 2019.

I started driving with Uber because I wanted to make extra money part-time. I was working in construction. Three months later, I stopped working construction because it was very difficult to stay in two types of work. I would drive long trips at nighttime, and then I would have to get up early to work in construction.

From the beginning, I drove 80 or 90 hours a week, every week, every week. I would make at least $1,200 dollars or $1,300 dollars per week. From that time, Uber started taking more and more money. Now, I drive for both companies. Before Christmas in 2018 they lowered the mileage. For example last week actually last week it happened, I’m made $823 dollars for 50 hours driving for Uber. This will be about $14 dollars per hour but that is before all the expenses. I paid about $170 dollars for gas last week. I pay $75 dollars monthly for my insurance, $50 dollars per month for my telephone and about $30 dollars to change the oil per month because I have to drive a lot. So overall I made about $11 dollar per hour last week. This is better
than some drivers because I paid for my car in cash but my income is going down the more money Uber and Lyft take from us over time.

Connecticut should take actions because Uber is a wealthy company taking more and more money from us. Everyone will be better off if we are better off too and we will be better off if we are paid enough to live.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you, Mr. Estrella for coming out this evening to share your testimony. Any questions or comments? Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am trying to understand the insurance piece. So do you actually have to, you provide auto insurance for your automobile?

GUILLERMO ESTRELLA: Yes, yes we do.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): You also have to pay, either Uber or Lyft for an additional insurance policy because I can tell you right now by personal insurance policy would never let me charge for ride so I’m assuming there must be another policy?

GUILLERMO ESTRELLA: No, we get covered our own insurance company. Like my company is All State, so that’s what I pay for. I don’t know what the other insurance coverage to be having the passenger in the car. That is something to do with the company. Not with me, not with the drivers.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): So, through you, Mr. Chairman. So there is no additional charge for that insurance. As I recall we required them to, the concern we had back when we discussed this was that the minimum insurance in the State of Connecticut is
much lower in some cases, you know, people will have lower insurance liability coverage, some people have a higher liability coverage, personal injury, liability that whole thing.

GUILLERMO ESTRELLA: Yes, yes that it the payment of the other car, you know, if you’ve got full coverage or you have liability, which my car is, I only cover it, I only drive with liability. But my company, I drive for Uber or Lyft I tell my company I work in construction and only gonna drive ten miles along the way because if I tell my company they might want to raise my car insurance payment. I don’t know.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Okay, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. HALL (7TH): Any other questions or comments from the Committee? Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Yeah, I just wanted to, and I apologize I have a big stack of testimony here but I want to know from you, the testimony that you gave tonight, did you have that written down.

GUILLERMO ESTRELLA: Yes, yes.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): And you submitted it, cause I think that I want to take a look at, you give a very good accounting of your, what it costs you and what you’re making and I think that is helpful for us to understand.

GUILLERMO ESTRELLA: Also I would not be coming to anyplace and lie to anybody, that is why I bring my income tax from last year, to show how many hours I worked, you know 42,925 online miles. I mean one year I drove almost 43,000 thousand miles. If I buy a new car it costs me like $18,000 dollars to
$20,000 dollars, let’s put it this way, in two years I’m gonna put on 90,000 miles, in four years I’m gonna put on 180,000 miles which the value of the car is gonna go down. In four years my car isn’t gonna cost $18,000 dollars, it’s gonna cost $4,000 dollars.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I was thinking about that when you were speaking the fact that you paid for your vehicle in cash, I understand. I don’t think you gave us a calculation on the cost of operating and the depreciation on the value of the car itself.

GUILLERMO ESTRELLA: That’s why I do my calculations and the pay with old car, which I pay cash cause with the other drivers, I know the case, they bought a new car and then they have car payments and they got the insurance. All the other maybe gonna their testimony is gonna be different.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I understand. I appreciate the detail you gave to us and appreciate you forthrightness about the situation, it really is very helpful. Thank you.

GUILLERMO ESTRELLA: I just wanna say something else. I think Uber crossed the line. I’m gonna explain to you so easy. When I start driving with Uber we start with a percentage which was 25 percent for them and 75 percent for us. The next year they stop percentage. They start time/miles that way they still pay us, such little money and they are keeping more money. Back in December that was not enough, but in December they decide dropping the miles from 82 cents, even more to 65 cents a mile which they still charge the customers the same amount of money so that way this company keeping more money for their pocket. That’s way we came
here, because they crossed the line. They went too far down, you know, with the percentage at least we knew if we charge you as a customer $100 dollars, we are going to get $75 dollars, you know, but in the other way with the time/miles they still charge you $100 dollars and we get paid $50 dollars. So that means who’s makin all the money over here without working?

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I understand. I was thinking that, you know, especially with this App there is very little overhead for Uber or Lyft so when they shifted that cost, you know, originally when they started, I think they probably knew they had to build up two things a driver base, you know, the worker base and then also buildup their customer base and now that they have a very large customer base and they have a very large number of employees, drivers working for them, then I think they feel like they’re in a position that they can extract more and that seem really backward to me because, you know, it seems backwards because as they get bigger, they shouldn’t need to extract as much. So somebody is making an awful amount of money in this equation.

GUILLERMO ESTRELLA: And I’m sorry, another thing, you can get a. Let’s put it this way. From you are here a trip costs like $10 dollar right now. In 10 minutes the same trip it could cost $20 dollars but because of the drivers we get a commission for the $10 dollars which was five dollars so they are keeping the $15 dollars. You think that is fair? You think that is fair that the company get greedy and gets more money, more money when after so many years they get so much money, that’s why we’re here. Because if we don’t come out here an tell you what
happened, nobody knows. Nobody knows and this companies, when I call the company one time, I told them he, you know things are not supposed to be like that, you what they tell me? It’s only a App, you turn it on, you’re working. You turn off you no working. This business should be controlled by the people like you guys, I mean, you know, because you can let ‘em, you’ve got to help us, you no can let this company take advantage and make all the profits and leaving us with such a little money with so many long time outside work, even my son, he told me, “Daddy, you spend time with me,” because I can’t I have to make a living. I turn off like two hours. Sometimes I go like five-six o’clock in the morning, I work until twelve, I go home, I stay awake a couple of hours and then I got to go back on the road because I know its not enough to pay my rent, it’s not gonna be enough to pay my bills, it’s not gonna be enough money.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I do, I really appreciate what you are saying and that you’re here taking time away, really valuable time which is what we just heard how important that your time is and that you’re here to testify because I know, you know, this is typically what happens. People get pushed too far and Uber and Lyft have pushed you and all the other drivers too far and I think that the fact that you’re willing to take time away both from your family and from earing a living for your family to come here and testify, it really demands that we pay attention. It is an industry that is out of control and it is our job to make sure that we are regulating it, that we learn about it, that we understand it and we make sure that it safe and good
for our society and good for our economy. So thank you so much.

GUILLERMO ESTRELLA: Okay, thank you very much.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you so much for coming out this evening. [Applause] Next we will have Carlos Manuel Gomez.

CARLOS GOMEZ: Hello. My name is Carlos Gomez. My friend he speak English good.

INTERPRETER: I will translate for him.

CARLOS GOMEZ: I came from Cuba. I drive Uber three-four years. I started in Miami. I moved to Connecticut two years ago. I live in [Indiscernible-11:12:58]. Uber when maybe sent a message in my mail said you driver Uber, we pay you time, you drive part-time you make $45 dollars an hour. Everybody, “Oh, good, $45 dollar an hour” very good money for today, only today, okay. I buy my car, $20,000 dollars, brand-new in Miami, everybody drive Uber, I drive Uber part-time and four years ago. And 6 months later Uber changed the price. Anybody say nothing, you know, this is America, anybody say nothing. But Uber is a small company a couple of years ago, maybe in Miami 2,000 drivers and in Connecticut maybe 300 drivers. Next year Uber changed the price again, less price, $2.25 and $1.75, next $1.25 and then they change the price from $1.25 [Indiscernible-11:14:35] to the price of 99 cents.

INTERPRETER: Eight-nine.

CARLOS GOMEZ: And now three months ago from 82 cents to 65 cents. Okay, my car, my old is lavish but I put 120,000 miles in one year.
[Indiscernible-11:15:05] because Uber saying, for example you went to New Haven to Hartford is 42 miles, okay, but you come back again because not too much people going to New Haven again. Okay, this is one problem. Second problem, in my case, I drive now my family care, it is an expensive car, it’s a Lexus 2016, is almost $40,000 dollars, for me, it’s impossible, $40,000 dollars for 65 cents is, no thanks.

Okay the other problem is 40,000 drivers in Connecticut have the same problem, everybody’s hungry, everybody’s tired, drive 16 hour day is no easy [Chuckles], very difficult drive for me 10 hours, but now everybody drive 14-16 hours because they need money, fake money because you make $200 dollars the people say, oh $200-$300 dollars a day for seven days is $2,000 dollars, no it’s fake because you make $300 dollars that day, you pull in maybe $60 dollar gas, food, coffee, cigarettes, whatever bucks, you make nothing. Okay and now I drive 100 hours in the week, I make almost $1,000 dollars, this is my case. I’m broke, I broke. This is my real case, I’m broke. I need to pay my insurance. [Speaking Spanish to Interpreter]

INTERPRETER: The car payment.

CARLOS GOMEZ: The car payment is almost $600 dollars plus gas, it’s crazy. It’s too crazy. Okay, my community, my people Uber driver, my community that drive with Uber and Lyft have problems in the street because [Indiscernible-11:17:40]. Many family leave. [Speaking Spanish]

INTERPRETER: A lot of couples are breaking up because of the situation.
CARLOS GOMEZ: So much problem. You need to relax when you drive from New Haven from Boston, you need to relax, you need a stretch, [Inaudible-11:18:04], relax.

REP. HALL (7TH): Yeah we absolutely understand your testimony and where you’re coming from Mr. Gomez and we appreciate you sharing your story with us. Are there any questions or comments for Mr. Gomez? Representative, Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I appreciate what you’re saying. I know that a lot of what you’re saying tonight are the same stories that I heard from cabdrivers in Stamford in 1998 when I was organizing cabdrivers who worked for, you know, regular cab companies, very similar stories about needing to drive all the time in order to make a living, and pay for the car, and pay for the gas, and to pay for the insurance and that car needed to be working all the time, so if the driver wasn’t able to drive all the time, they would find a sub-leaser that would drive in the hours, the car was always on the road and that was the only way for cabdrivers to make money. It sounds like a very similar story as what I heard in 1998 hasn’t improved very much. I am, I know that some people will hear this and wonder why do you do it, why are you doing this if it’s so awful. I’m not asking you because I think that, but I want to ask that question because I’m bet it’s on somebody’s mind [Laugh]?

CARLOS GOMEZ: Okay. [Speaking Spanish] I started at Uber 4 years ago when Uber say you make $45 dollar an hour, everybody buying the car, everybody drive, now [speaking Spanish].
INTERPRETER: This time went by, he’s choking literally and he has to support his family, for food.

CARLOS GOMEZ: I no have no option.

INTERPRETER: He don’t have no more options.

CARLOS GOMEZ: Speaking Spanish. It’s Uber life, I mean, it’s Uber life for everybody who would say, Carlos, you make, Uber take 20 percent from I went from $40 dollar, from my account, maybe 30-40 you lose 30 percent but now you make $100 dollar, Uber take $50 dollars, it’s hard. It’s only business from the company, you know from the driver. If I understand the big company saying the employee, blah, blah, blah, blah but it’s too deafening, it’s 50 percent, it’s 50 percent, it’s too much. Everybody lose money every day, they stays broke. Connecticut is broke. [Speaking Spanish] Everybody 95 percent of the people complaining is three months ago, oh two months ago, oh maybe the bank take the car. It’s crazy. And my only question is the driver Uber in no work Boston, no work in New York, no work in Massachusetts, no work in, because they have no work. They have political drivers. The App no working in Boston, Springfield, New York. Everybody working here, New York working, eh, Springfield eh, Boston driver working here, and the [Speaking Spanish].

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I do want to let you know that I think, the struggle that you are going through, your reaction and being here tonight to all of your for taking the time to organize and be here, that’s really the only way we are going to have any change. So I know it’s difficult for you to share these stories, for you to sit here all night, it’s
difficult for us but I think it’s harder on you than it is on us and I do want to say that you’re doing the right thing by organizing, that’s the only way you’re gonna see change. So, thank you.

CARLOS GOMEZ: Okay, thank you. The 14,000 families need help, please.

REP. HALL (7TH): Absolutely. Any other questions from the Committee? Thank you for coming out, we appreciate your testimony. Next we have Rosana Olan.

ROSANA OLAN: Hello, good evening.

REP. HALL (7TH): Rosana, so have you submitted testimony to the Committee?

ROSANA OLAN: I did.

REP. HALL (7TH): Okay, thank you. So if you could just summarize because we have the written testimony that would be helpful.

ROSANA OLAN: Okay so I wanted to say some stuff, they just talked about it. But I want to add on to see if you guys like digest it, okay, and process more better. So what’s going on right now, since when Uber and Lyft create this App, it was an idea.

For example Uber was two people, who come up with this great idea, which should help everybody in this country, all over the country, all over Europe, all over Puerto Rico. I’m from Puerto Rico and it was really nice. I really love driving all over, I enjoy it, no matter the weather condition, I love to drive and I like to help other people. I’ve been a transporter, valet service, valet service supervisor. I’ve been in the industry for a long time and I’m 36 years old.
Our concern is that the idea went too far away and become more greedy. The idea turned for them to get more rich, rich like James said. The payment went down, it was over here and it went down, so crazy like the percentage from before and then switch it by miles it was $1.75 and they change it like six times so right now we’re getting paid 75 cents per mile and 20 cents per minute which makes no difference.

I just got on my App a couple of hours ago, there was a search, the search was like, it was busy at the time and a lot of riders need a ride, right, you need to go the Bradly Airport or any places, so the search what it makes, it makes more expensive. So the App, the Uber they keep charging you, you guys the same amount, right. But now the search for a kind of bonus, so which means we not getting the double the money you guys pay, we’re getting a little extra money, but it will be $3 dollars, $1 dollar extra in our pocket. If I go right now to New Haven where I live, I’m gonna get paid around $39.00 dollars probably around $40.00 dollars and you know how much the App would charge you, $180.00 dollars. If I get a ride from here to Boston I cannot get no ride on my way back cause I cannot work in Boston, and I cannot work in New York or cannot work any other state cause we are not allowed. But it’s real crazy because these people, I know everybody needs work, but these people come Boston, New York, New Jersey all over the state and they could come over here and work and right now there is a mass of people working over here for Uber Lyft, you know, it’s going crazy. And a lot of people getting, having problems with anxiety, depressed, sometimes I myself can’t recover my
sleep, it’s hard for me to fall asleep cause all I have in my mind how I’m gonna make my payments, my car payment is $500 dollars. My insurance payment is about $378 dollars and I spend $150 dollars in gas per week and if I keep addin up all my bills and my debts, my debts is more than what I’m paid now. If it wasn’t for my husband, I’ll tell you, I could never make it. And I’m still concerned that he got to take over all the responsibilities because I cannot make enough money. I’ll be lucky if I could make for myself $300 dollars in a week.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you. Thank you Rosana for coming out this evening and sharing your story and your testimony with us. Do we have any questions? Representative Porter.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for your testimony. I’m just curious, you said that you can go to Boston to drop somebody off but you can’t bring anybody back from Boston cause you can’t work outside of the state yet. Then you went on to say that Boston and New York and other states can come here and do business, why is that?

ROSANA OLAN: We actually, there’s a lot of things that are going on behind the App which is under Uber Company that we don’t know.

REP. PORTER (94TH): So are you saying that Uber is treating in Connecticut workers different than the rest of the states?

ROSANA OLAN: Differently and like one of the guys said Hartford gets paid 60 cents a mile, New Haven we get 65 cents and one other he gets miles he gets 69 cents. So I wonder why there is a difference. We are all workers, we work hard. We wake up at
three in the morning to be sure we are ready to get those passengers because we love doing this, it’s not, we’re fighting because we love doing this and we want to help other people, but we want to get better benefit, dignity and standards. You know, it’s not right, they are keeping sometimes more than 50 percent of what you guys are paying. It’s very unfair, they are getting rich, and rich and rich and what about us. We put in our cars, insurance, time, sometime I spend a couple of hours in my car waiting for something to come up, nothing.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you for that. I mean and it is really concernin. I didn’t realize, I knew there were issues but I didn’t realize, I think went to his depth and I have used Uber but it’s been like when they first came out and I know maybe about a month or so ago, I was lookin to take a trip and I had to fly out of New York so out of curiosity,[Chuckles] and I went on to Uber and they wanted $125 dollars to take me LaGuardia Airport and I was like, “I don’t think so.” Yeah to know you’re only getting $40 dollars on a $100 dollar trip, yeah, that’s disturbins but thank you for that. I appreciate it.

ROSANA OLAN: Can I add something about them? Right now I would say the majority of the Uber driver and Lyft they are not taking the risks to take trip to New York because of that, because while we’re gonna get in our pocket literally it’s gonna be $80 bucks and for that they supposedly paying the tolls, well what about mileage, what about the time. I spent two hours, two-and-a-half, three hours going that way and I’m coming back empty and I can’t bring nobody because probably the state or I don’t know how they relate, I really got no clue how, why they
don’t allows us to work over there if they come over here. I see a lot of Pennsylvania plates, Florida, a lot of places, they come over here, drop people and they keep workin around.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Okay, well thank you for your responses and Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you so much for coming out this evening, we appreciate your testimony.

ROSANA OLAN: Thank you, I appreciate it.


CAMERON CHAMPLIN: Good evening members of the Committee. I am here to testify on Bill Number 988 which has to do with gas distribution. It is a very important issue. You have my written testimony. Because it is so late, I won’t go through it all, but I know you understand that this is a very important issue and all of these safety items have to be adhered to before you install any of these gas lines or gas distribution lines.

So as I tell you in my testimony there are a lot of safety regulations and qualifications that have to be done. We would like to have this Bill passed to make sure that anybody installing these gas lines in the State of Connecticut have to have all the qualifications necessary. My name is Cameron Champlin and I do represent Local 777 Plumbers and Pipefitters about 3,000 of our members, we cover the whole State of Connecticut and we do all these installations including the gas installations.

I would also like to say on the minimum wage of $15 dollars I hope you find a way to pass this and I
know it is a hard situation for everybody on this Committee to craft a Bill that is going to be fair for everybody but you can’t leave these workers that are down there makin $10 bucks an hour, not in this state. This state costs a lot, as has been stated, I believe somebody said it’s around $24 dollars an hour you would have to make, just to be above the poverty line. So I’d just like to say, I’d like to see that happen also. If there’s any question, I’d be glad to answer them. And thank you for staying here so late.

REP. HALL (7TH): Any question for Mr. Champlain. Thank you for coming out Cameron, I appreciate it. Next we have it looks like a series of folks who are interested in testifying on Bill 7273. So I’m not sure if everyone has submitted testimony to the Committee and if you have we appreciate that. So all that we would ask because of this later hour that if you just give a few seconds about a summary, and it would probably be better if you guys all just came up so we could see you as a group because it is always good to see that we know there are a lot of folks who are.

VICTOR COSTANZA: My name is Victor Costanza, I am the President of CHANGE-CT. The purpose of our organization is to protect college students and provide equity for them so last year we started a campaign called PayUp which I meant to protect interns and student teachers. We came up with this campaign because through many of our experiences we have suffered while pursuing internships and our members as well who are student teachers have suffered from low income communities and we believe that if there are restrictions or laws that help interns and students teachers get paid a lot more of
students who come from low income communities or marginalized groups can come into the public sector. This tends to be a problem especially with student teachers where a lot of Connecticut schools to provide an education major, they always ask in the last semester to take a semester of student teaching and a lot of them advise to not take a job. That is super unfair. And they have to clock-in almost 40 hours of work and then do another 20 hours of lesson planning and if they are from the low income community, they have to get another part-time job. You are overworking college students. So no other state has these kind of protections when it comes to regulating hours or making sure that companies do pay their interns or other entities. And we do understand that some organizations don’t have the funds for it, so this is the point of a Study Bill to understand up to date statistics and making sure which is the correct plan to protect interns. And just to show how much interns are not protected after some research we found a Federal Court Case from 1975, its “O’Conner v Davis” and in that case the decision was “interns are not protected under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 unless they receive some sort of pay.” This also means that the laws enforced by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission cannot protect interns. The only areas that have any kind of laws in workplace protections for interns are Oregon, Washington, D.C. and New York City.

So interns are very, very, you know, you may not think about it but they are very vulnerable to discrimination, suffering and abuse. The reason why there is not much data on interns is because as, you know, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity
Commission doesn’t consider interns as employees even though interns most of the time are employees, they are putting in labor. So this Bill will take the first step of studying this issue and hopefully by next year we do have that data and we can construct a more progressive and equitable solution for college students in Connecticut.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you, Victor for coming out and testifying this evening. Have any questions or comments from the Committee for Victor? Representative Porter.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Victor I just wondered, do you know what, you said I think you named about three or four states that actually have protection for interns, do you know what those protections are?

VICTOR COSTANZA: No.

REP. PORTER (94TH): No, you don’t. Okay.

VICTOR COSTANZA: Three other states?

REP. PORTER (94TH): Well you named, New York was one of them.

VICTOR COSTANZA: Oh, I like, I mean areas that have, that closed the loophole with the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Yeah, yeah, that’s not with the concept that we’re working but I’m brining up another issue, but no just the only three places that have closed the loophole are Oregon, Washington, D.C. and New York City.

REP. PORTER (94TH): And New York City, okay, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.
REP. HALL (7TH): So I’ll just have your colleagues that are with you if they want to share just a few words because we have your written testimony, if they wanted to share a few words. Introduce yourselves so we know who’s with you today.

MICHELLE CARDONO: I mean I can introduce myself, my name is Michell Cardono. I am the Vice-President of our organization C.H.A.N.G.E. and a recent graduate from Central Connecticut State University. I was an intern for the State of Connecticut Judicial Branch the summer of 2017 so you have my story and my testimony but to summarize, I did not receive any pay. I had to, I decided to take the internship class over the summer because I couldn’t risk losing out on any of my hours in my part-time job because I do use that money to support myself. But what I did not realize is that my scholarship wouldn’t cover summer class so I ended up paying $1500 dollars out of pocket in order to take the supplemental class that only met four times and to work this internship without pay. So that’s my story and why I support this Bill so I hope you do to.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you.

ROSHANAY TAHIR: Hi, good evening. My name is Roshanay Tahir and you also have my written testimony but I am a sophomore at Central Connecticut State University where I study Biomolecular Science and psychology. I am also a board of director for C.H.A.N.G.E. and I support this Bill because we initially started as an initiative against the exploitation of college students and it is unfair for those students and some of the stories that I have are, there was someone’s daughter who had to give up working for,
give up an unpaid internship for working for the Governor because it would have required her to give up her job that paid her as well as paying for six credit hours and there is also another individual that could not afford to go through teacher training that would have had to leave their current job in order to work for free and that wound, they wound up becoming a teacher however, it was at the expense of losing years of service and many years of pay. So that is why I support this Bill and why none of these individuals should be suffering in order to have, in order to reach their goals.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you for sharing that. Any questions?

REP. PORTER (94TH): No questions, just a comment. Just want to thank all of your for comin out tonight and congratulate you on your recent graduation and just bringin some light to this. I’m like, wow, really. So thank you for that. We will be takin a deeper delve into your testimonies since you only summarized, but what you touched on is concernin, so thank you all. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. HALL (7TH): Senator Kushner. Before you leave I just wanted to, I’m sorry I missed your testimony because I stepped out for a minute to talk to the drivers and I know you’ve been here all day and cause I saw you earlier, but I do think that you are on the right track in bringing this to our attention. We did craft the Bill that would be study bill that would help us to like begin to establish an understanding of what you’re talking about. I mentioned to some of you I started organizing teaching and research assistant, graduate student workers in New York City in 1998 and it took
us a really long time [laughter] to make some headway in that and to bring understanding to people that didn’t realize what the work was that was being done and, but eventually we did not only succeed in organizing and winning good contracts so we’ve made a huge difference in the industry and in the university structure in getting recognition and actual pay and conditions improved for teaching and research assistant. So, you’re at the beginning of this process and what you’re doing is really important because, you know, coming to us the way you have will help us understand precisely what the issues are and if there is a way that we can address them either through legislative action or if there is an alternative you should have access to, so it’s really important. Thank you.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you guys. Thank you guys for coming out, we appreciate you guys for staying this late. So next we have Arvia Walker. Vito Bonanno. Dave Lucas. Kate Grant. Andre Simons and last but absolutely not least, John Board.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Last time you said, this is our last person, then somebody else walked in the door, so be careful [Laughter].

JOHN BOARD: Good evening Labor Committee. I am here to just deliver a few words on 7273. I do think that it is definitely worth a study. I do have some concerns if the study does move forward to an implementation Bill as many of you guys are aware specifically Representative Polletta my focus is in higher education and specifically if we move forward with this, my concern is that the research, let’s say, someone applies for research grant dollars, are research dollars going to pay for students as
opposed to going towards actual research funding, actual research itself. So my only concern with this is related to the higher education application of any potential research grants or student monies, etc. in that form.

I am also an Uber driver, Representative, Senator Kushner so if there are concerns or questions that you have relating to that Bill as well, I’m more than willing to entertain those as well.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you, John for what your interested in, appreciate you staying this late to talk to us this evening. Any questions or concerns? Representative.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Yes, I’m confused. What’s your concern that when you apply for a research grant, if students are paid, it takes money from the money that goes to research, is that what I heard?

JOHN BOARD: My concern is that the potential research dollars that could be used for actual research would be diverted to potential administrative costs of that nature. I’m always, I’ve been in favor for example the Jackson’s Lab Project and things of that nature so I just want to make sure that any research dollars are stretched the full way that they can be.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): So maybe cut into administrative costs that the college charges because so often in these grants they are getting like a 50 percent, I mean.

JOHN BOARD: Representative there’s always ways that we can try to reduce our higher education costs and
burdens on our students as it relates to tuition and things like of that nature.

REP. WILSON PHEANIOUS (53RD): Okay, thank you.

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): John, thank you for being here. I know that it’s been a long day but we’ve spoken so much about higher ed and, you know, as the last person to go, it’s testament to you young folks here that waited it out all day. You know me, I’m a young individual, I went to college in Connecticut and didn’t graduate too long ago. These three folks up here are grandparents, and I would say I’m not even married yet, so I got a long way to go to be a grandparent but they have more energy than me that this hour so that’s a good thing [Laughter]. Oh, four okay. Just me and Representative Hall here that are laggin behind

REP. HALL: The grandparent part. [Laughter]

REP. POLLETTA (68TH): But I’ve spent a lot of time. I think all you guys should be commended for being here and the amount of interested you are showing until eleven o’clock on a Thursday, so thank you.

REP. HALL (7TH): Thank you, guys so much for staying with us this evening, I appreciate it. And guys, get home safely, okay? [Laughter and talking].