The Senate was called to order at 5:12 o'clock p.m., the President in the Chair.

THE CHAIR:

The Senate will please come to order. The Senate will please come to order, and we then invite our chaplain, Rabbi Lazowski, to lead us in the opening prayer.

RABBI LAZOWSKI:

Our thought for today is from the book of Proverbs chapter 11 verse 2, "When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom."

Let us pray:

Eternal God, Source of all being, look favorably on this body of women and men, our dedicated Senators, as they strive to do the work of the people of the State of Connecticut. Keep them humble, but give them the wisdom, courage, and integrity to fulfill the noble tasks they have been elected to complete. Make them messengers of hope, advocates for justice, and makers of peace. Look favorably upon our nation, President, our state, and our leaders. Protect our defenders of freedom from all harm.
Hear our prayer, O God, as we pray. And let us all say, Amen.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you very much, Rabbi. I would ask Senator Bergstein to come forward and lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH):

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Rabbi -- thank you Senator. Our distinguished majority leader, Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Mr. President, and good evening, Mr. President. Good to see you up there today. Mr. President, does the clerk have any business on his desk?

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk?

CLERK:

The clerk is in possession of Senate Agenda No. 1 and Senate Agenda No. 2, dated Thursday, May 16, 2019.
THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. And, I move all items on Senate Agenda No. 1 and 2, dated Thursday, May 16, 2019, to act upon as indicated and that the Agenda be incorporated by reference in the Senate Journal and Senate Transcript.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Without objections, so ordered.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. Will the Senate stand at ease for a moment please?

THE CHAIR:

The Senate will please stand at ease. [Pause]. The Senate will please come back to order. Mr. Majority Leader.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, for markings for our goal list, please?

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, Senator.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. On Calendar page 50, Calendar 288, Senate Bill 1078, go. Followed by Calendar page 20, Calendar 279, Senate Bill 1000, go. Followed by Calendar page 8, Calendar 135,
Senate Bill 861, go. Followed by Calendar page 1, Calendar 38, Senate Bill 804, go. Followed by Calendar page 38, Calendar 435, Senate Bill 831, go. Followed by Calendar page 32, Calendar 400, Senate Bill 1114, go. Followed by Calendar page 2 -- I’m sorry. Calendar page 12, Calendar 182, Senate Bill 1026, go. Followed by Calendar page 52, Senate Bill 448 -- I’m sorry. Calendar 448, Senate Bill 3, go. I’d like to do that again. Calendar page 52, Calendar 448, Senate Bill 3, go. Followed by Calendar page 43, Calendar 475, Senate -- House Bill 5004, go. Followed by Calendar page 43, Calendar 478, House Bill 7364, go.

Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Mr. Majority Leader. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK:

Page 50, Calendar No. 288, substitute for Senate Bill No. 1078, AN ACT CONCERNING DOULA CERTIFICATION AND MEDICAID REIMBURSEMENT FOR DOULA SERVICES.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Mr. Clerk. There are amendments.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Senator Marilyn Moore, distinguished Chair of the Human Services Committee from the great city of Bridgeport.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND):

Thank you, sir. Good afternoon, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:
Good afternoon.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND):

Mr. President, I move acceptance of the Joint Committee’s favorable report and passage of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. The bill has been moved. Will you remark? Senator Moore.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND):

I would ask that the clerk please call the amendment, and I seek leave of the Chamber to summarize LCO 877?

THE CHAIR:

Yep, and Mr. Clerk.

CLERK:

LCO No. 877, Senate Schedule A.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND):

I move adoption of the amendment.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Moore. Senate Amendment Schedule A has been moved. Senator Moore, will you remark?

SENATOR MOORE (22ND):

Yes. This amendment is actually a strike-all, which is now the bill. It’s regarding the certification of Doulas and creating a workgroup.
Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Will you remark on the amendment? Will you remark on Senate Amendment Schedule A? Senator Logan.

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. And, I rise in support of the amendment. I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Logan. Would you remark further on the amendment? Would you remark further on Senate A? Remark, if not, I will try your minds on Senate A. All in favor please indicate by saying aye. (All) Aye. Opposed, nay. You guys have it. Senate Amendment Schedule A is adopted. Senator Moore.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND):

Thank you. Mr. President, this bill is about Doulas, and for those of you who have not -- are not familiar with a Doula, they are people who are trained in the community to help women during their pregnancy. There is a high incidence of mortality among minority women, and you will find Doulas in most communities of color. They are trained, and there are some places where they do certification. Over the course of the last three or four months many of the Doulas have met throughout the state, and they would like to be certified, and we are going to start a workgroup to understand what other
certifications that we need under DSS to complete this, and the workgroup will report by -- I believe it will begin on -- on September 1, 2019, and will come back and give a report to the Committee of Cognizant regarding the outcome. I would hope that my colleague would support this bill and have a huge impact on all the communities, but it is a women’s health bill.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Moore. Will you remark further on the bill as amended by Senate Amendment Schedule A? Senator Logan.

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. I rise in support of this bill, and I’d just like to say that in terms of the Doulas, they’re providing a great service to our community, particularly women in our community, and I think that it is time that we come up to speed in terms of what is actually provided in our community, and I think taking a look at this and having this report come back will guide us to properly move forward in the future session.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Logan. Will you remark further on the bill as amended? Will you remark further? If not, Senator Moore.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND):


Thank you, Mr. President. If there’s no objection, I ask that this be put on the consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Moore. The bill has been moved to the consent Calendar. Is there objection to placing the bill as amended on the consent Calendar? I’m seeing none. It is so ordered. Senator Logan.

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH):

Nope. I’m good. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Okay. Thank you. The bill will be placed on the consent Calendar. Mr. Majority Leader.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, if we can on the next bill, Calendar page 20, Calendar 279, Senate Bill 1000 -- if we could just PT that for the moment and move on to the next bill please?

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Mr. Majority Leader. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK:

Page 8, Calendar No. 135, Senate Bill No. 861, AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEFINITION OF “SERVICE IN TIME OF WAR” AND STATE RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTAIN VETERANS’ SERVICES.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Senator Maroney, the distinguished Chair of our Veterans’ Committee.
SENATOR MARONEY (14TH):

Good evening, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Good evening, Senator.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH):

I move acceptance of the Joint Committee’s favorable report and passage of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Maroney. The bill has been moved. Will you remark, Senator Maroney?

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. This bill cleans up the definition of service in the time of war. It removes some redundant text from the definition, and it clarifies that service in the time of war would be -- it could be less than 90 days during a conflict if you were separated because of an injury during that conflict. In addition, it moves the residency requirements for the Veterans’ home at Rocky Hill in line with current practice. It states in there two years, but the practices that they have been actually allowing for that upon residency in the state, so it just brings us in line with existing practice of the Department of Veterans’ Affairs.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Would you remark further on the bill? Senator Logan.

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH):
Thank you, Mr. President. I rise in support of the bill as adequately described by the good Senator. This is a matter of -- of bringing into line more with current policies. I think in terms of minimizing or limiting confusion in terms of the process in dealing with the Veterans, I think it’s a plus, and I think we should do all we can to approve this bill.

Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:


SENATOR MARONEY (14TH):

Mr. President, if there is no objection, I move to place this item on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. The bill has been moved for placement on the Consent Calendar. Is there objection? Is there objection? I’m seeing none. We will add the bill to our Consent Calendars. Thank you, Senator. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK:

Page 1, Calendar No. 38, Substitute for Senate Bill No. 804, AN ACT CONCERNING A COMMUNITY OMBUDSMAN. There are amendments.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Maroney.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH):
Thank you, Mr. President. Nice speaking with you again. I move acceptance of the Joint Committee’s favorable report and passage of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. The bill has been moved. Senator Maroney, would you remark?

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH):

Yes. Mr. President, the clerk is in possession of an amendment LCO No. 8530. I move the amendment and seek leave to summarize.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

CLERK:

LCO NO. 8530, Senate Schedule A.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Senator Maroney.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. This amendment would change the date for the program to be developed from September 1, 2019 to January 1, 2020, and I move adoption.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. The amendment has been moved for adoption. Would you remark further on the amendment, Senate Amendment Schedule A? Would you remark further? If not, we will try your minds. All in favor please indicate by saying aye. (All)
Aye. Opposed? The ayes have it. The amendment is adopted. Senator Maroney.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH):

Thank you very much, Mr. President. I also wanted to thank Senator Kelly for his help with that amendment. This bill would help create a community ombudsman as we move more towards aging in place. We want to make sure that we’re offering the same protections to people who are being served in their home as we do to those being served in a nursing home, so this bill instructs the state ombudsman to develop a program for community ombudsman and to report back on that program to the Aging and Human Services Committee on January 1, 2020.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Will you remark further on the bill as amended? Senator Kelly.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST):

Thank you, Mr. President. And, I also rise in support of this bill, and I’d like to align my comments with those of Senator Maroney in that this is a -- a good initiative as we try to transition and realign more community and home-based services rather than institutional. What we also want to do is make sure that the proper protections for individual safety are there in the community. We have these protections in the institutional setting, and what this will do is now allow those to be provided to individuals in the community-based service environment. I think this is smart legislation, and I certainly support the bill.

Thank you.
THE CHAIR:


SENATOR MARONEY (14TH):

Thank you, Mr. President, and I thank Senator Kelly for his advocacy on this concept. If there’s no objection, I move to place this item on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. The bill has been moved for inclusion in our Consent Calendar. Is there objection? Is there objection? I’m seeing none. It will be so ordered. The bill will be placed on our Consent Calendar. Thank you, Senator. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK:

page 38, Calendar No. 435, Substitute for Senate Bill No. 831, AN ACT CONCERNING MINOR REVISIONS TO SPECIAL PAROLE AND PAROLE DISCHARGE STATUTES.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Winfield, distinguished Chair of our Judiciary Committee.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. I move acceptance of the Joint Committee’s favorable report and passage of the bill.

THE CHAIR:
Thank you, Senator. The bill has been moved. Will you remark? Senator Winfield.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH):

Oh, yes. Thank you, Mr. President. This is a bill that comes to us through the Judiciary Committee. What the bill does is when the Board of Pardons and Parole considers terminating a special parole for someone, the Office of Victim Services would notify any registered victims in the case. Those victims may submit a statement pursuant to that intention. It also allows for the termination of special parole without a court order, and then it changes the membership of the panels that are doing the consideration from two to three. One of those individuals would be the chairperson or a full-time member of the Board of Pardons and Parole. It’s a good bill. It came through us -- to us through the Judiciary Committee, and I would urge adoption.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Would you remark further on the bill? Senator Kissel.

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH):

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I just would like to stand and associate myself with the remarks of Chairman Winfield. I’m in support of the bill and committee, and I’m happy to support it now, and urge my colleagues to do likewise.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Kissel. Would you remark further on the bill? Senator Champagne.
SENATOR CHAMPAGNE (35TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. If it’s still okay with you, I’d like to ask a question of the proponent of the bill?

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Please proceed.

SENATOR CHAMPAGNE (35TH):

Thank you. Through you, Mr. President. The -- when the victim’s advocate is notified, do they have an opportunity to speak to the parole board?

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Senator Winfield.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH):

Thank you, Mr. President, and through you, Mr. President. Because I missed the beginning of the question, could the question be asked again?

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Senator Champagne, would you repeat the question?

SENATOR CHAMPAGNE (35TH):

Yes. Through you, Mr. President. The -- the victim, when notified, do they have a chance to go to the parole board to plead their case before the ending of this special parole?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Winfield.
SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH):

Yes. Through you, Mr. President. I’m looking for the line about that -- in that section. It’s in section one. So, what it says is any victim may submit a statement to the board concerning whether such persons -- the person that we’re talking about period of parole should be terminated, so they are allowed to submit a statement about whether or not that parole should be terminated.

Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Winfield. Senator Champagne, you have the floor.

SENATOR CHAMPAGNE (35TH):

Thank you, Mr. President, through you. So, the person can’t show up -- or the victim cannot show up in person to testify?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Winfield.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH):

Through you, Mr. President. The bill doesn’t talk about the form in which that statement would be submitted, so I think it would be pursuant to the rules established by the Board of Pardons and Parole, and I can’t speak to you about those rules. I don’t have them in front of me.

Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:
Thank you, Senator Winfield. Senator Champagne.

SENATOR CHAMPAGNE (35TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. I do know that if we rule with the side of the court that the victim should have an opportunity to speak, especially depending on which crime it is. There’s some pretty serious crimes out there, and I understand they can submit a letter, but I think when you do present in person it makes a statement.

Thank you, Mr. President. I’m all set.

THE CHAIR:


SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH):

If there’s no objection, I’d ask this be placed on Consent.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. The bill has been moved for placement on our Consent Calendar. Is there objection to including this bill in our Consent Calendar? I’m seeing none. It will be so ordered. Thank you. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK:

Page 32, Calendar No. 400, Substitute for Senate Bill No. 1114, AN ACT CONCERNING PAYMENTS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION TO A MUNICIPALITY THAT PROVIDES AMBULANCE SERVICES ON BEHALF OF A CORRECTIONAL FACILITY.
THE CHAIR:

Senator Winfield.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH):

Yes. Thank you, Mr. President. I move acceptance of the Joint Committee’s favorable report and passage of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Will you remark?

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. Yes, I will. This bill causes the commissioner of corrections to reimburse municipalities for municipal ambulance that would be moving of the people in their care in the same manner that it would reimburse non-municipal ambulances in the case of an individual who doesn’t have insurance. This ensures that the municipality is reimbursed totally.

Through you, and I urge passage.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Would you remark further on the bill? Senator Kissel.

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH):

Thank you -- thank you very much, Mr. President. And, it’s remiss of me not to say great to see you up there this afternoon. I would like to thank Chairman Winfield for moving this bill forward. The way it is drafted, it would apply to any community that has a correctional facility, but in particular, in my district, there is one facility that has
pretty much when inmates get to be 55 or older they end up in Osborn, which is in the small town of Somers, and what we’re finding is that just like the state of Connecticut, as people get older they have more medical issues, and while there’s a fairly lucrative contract with the private provider of ambulance services that basically does the regular runs, the little town of Somers in particular has just two ambulances for the whole town, has been getting increased -- steadily increased calls to respond to medical situations at that particular institution, and their reimbursement rate is substantially -- I mean hundreds and hundreds of dollars less than the private provider, and unfortunately -- and there has been ongoing meetings with the Corrections folks and the Commissioner of Corrections that what has been occurring in the recent years is that -- okay, let’s say someone is set to go on a regular visit to it could be St. Francis, Hartford Hospital, or UCONN, and the private providers call and they say, all right, we’ll be there in three or four hours, and sometimes the folks in the department say, well that’s just not fast enough for us, so then they hang up and call the town 9-1-1, and the town has an absolute obligation to respond. And, so hopefully, this will continue the conversation that folks are having with representatives with the Department of Corrections, and alleviate the situation not only for folks in the town of Somers but any other municipality that has a correctional facility, and again, very thankful to the leadership of the Judiciary Committee for moving this bill forward.

Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:
Thank you to the distinguished Ranking Member of the Judiciary Committee. Will you remark further on the bill? Senator Winfield.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. If there is no further conversation, I’d ask this be moved to Consent?

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Winfield. The bill has been moved for placement on our Consent Calendar. Is there objection to inclusion in this matter on our Consent Calendar? I’m seeing none. It will be so ordered. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK:

Page 12, Calendar No. 182, Substitute for Senate Bill No. 1026, AN ACT ESTABLISHING CERTAIN INCENTIVES TO GROW THE BIOSCIENCE INDUSTRY IN THE STATE. There are amendments.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Senator Hartley, the distinguished Chair of the Commerce Committee. Good afternoon, madam.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH):

Good afternoon, Mr. President. Always a delight to see you there, sir. I move acceptance of the Joint Committee’s favorable report, sir, and passage of the bill.

THE CHAIR:
Thank you. The bill has been moved. Would you remark? Senator Hartley.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH):

Yes. Thank you, Mr. President. This is another initiative by the State of Connecticut to once again put an anchor in the ground regarding the bioscience sector. Thus far, the State of Connecticut has distinguished itself in becoming a bio-hub by a number of initiatives -- a number of ones that the state actually has participated in, and right now, we -- the reports that we have 39,000 workers in the bioscience industry, which is in -- representing about 2500 companies throughout the state, and we will all recall the initiatives of the Jackson Lab and then more recently the TIP program at the University of Connecticut, which have helped to grow and support this sector by bringing in talented and skilled workers and being a fertile place by which many startups can initiate themselves. So, Mr. President, there is an amendment, sir.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, Senator.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH):

It is LCO 8892, and I ask that the clerk please call and I be granted leave to summarize, please?

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

CLERK:

LCO No. 8892, Senate Schedule A.
SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH):

I move adoption.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator, for moving adoption. Will you remark on the amendment? Senator Hartley.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH):

Yes. Thank you. And, so, Mr. President, Senate Amendment A will continue the initiative that this state has thus far invested in and help us to leverage that and to telegraph the fact that Connecticut is a place, which is poised to continue to grow and be a leader quite frankly in the bioscience area. What Amendment A does is it actually strikes sections 1 through 4 and section 6 and 7, and leaves section 5, which initiates a marketing campaign to be conducted by Connecticut innovations to basically broadcast and telegraph all of those bio companies that -- the 2500 bio companies, the 39,000 workers in an effort to connect them as a strong bio ecosystem, but more importantly to also telegraph to the rest of the region, the country, and even internationally, that this is a network of -- a strong network of bioscience, and so the -- with the marketing campaign, which by the way was the initiative and work from the bioscience strategic -- strategy plan, this will help us to once again reach many other prospects to grow this sector, which is such an important part of our economy. So, I -- I move adoption, sir.

THE CHAIR:
Thank you, Senator Hartley. Will you remark further on the Amendment, on Senate Amendment Schedule A? Senator Martin.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST):

Good afternoon, Mr. President. Good to see you up there.

THE CHAIR:

Good afternoon.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST):

I rise in support of this -- this amendment along with the underlying bill. I think it’s a great idear. It requires the Connecticut innovations, along with the bioscience industry to really put their heads together and to come up with an advertisement strategy and to put a plan together to market that sector and to increase our bio footprint here that is doing extremely well, so I rise in support, again, for this piece of legislation.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Martin. Will you remark further on the amendment, on Senate Amendment Schedule A? Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. It’s good to see you up here. I rise in support of this amendment. I also want to take a moment to compliment the remarkable hard work of the proponent of this bill. She has been remarkable along with the Commerce Committee in
advocating the bioscience for many a years, and this bill reflected on its original purpose, much more dramatic input and input for this project, and I want to raise that even though this amendment cuts down some of the language, I want to take a moment to acknowledge some of the original vision of -- of the -- of the base language where we are looking at capital base tax credits for our biosciences, which is critical to motivate investment and to build out advantage in the bioscience sector. We are looking at corporate tax credits limited for excess credit. Another example of the vision and the understanding that we need to make investments in the sector, and we cannot shortchange them because they have far too many choices throughout this country and throughout the world to set up their base and also to -- to really work on development, research, and economic assistance, matching grant that has been stripped in this amendment, and it is critical for us to understand that we have to make the proper investment to be able to attract people. With that said, I urge support of this because it is a step forward, but I would encourage for us to explore the base of this bill and encourage passage down the road.

Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Would you remark further on the amendment? Senator Formica.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH):

Good afternoon, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:
Good afternoon, sir.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH):

I rise for a question for the proponent of the amendment, please.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, sir.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. Good afternoon, Senator. Thank you. I see by this amendment we're striking sections 1 through 4 and 6 and 7, which leaves just 5; is that correct?

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH):

Through you, Mr. President. Yes, it is.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Hartley.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. So, section 5 calls for the development of a marketing plan, and it -- and hiring -- I'm sorry. I'm trying to catch back up to where I was here. You might give me a second. So, Connecticut Innovations in consultation with a trade group -- unnamed -- contract with an advertising agency to create a marketing plan. Is there a budgeted dollars within that Connecticut Innovations for this?

Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:
Senator Hartley, would you care to respond?

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH):

Yes. Thank you, Mr. President, and through you, to Senator Formica. This will be done within the resources of CI, which has a number of funds, one of which happens to be the CBIF fund, which this fits perfectly under; that is the Connecticut Bioscience Fund, and we have had conversation with leadership of CI, and they are totally committed to this. In fact, they have begun these conversations with the industry in the trade, one of which is the bioscience -- the Connecticut Bioscience Group.

Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Hartley. Senator Formica, you have the floor, sir.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH):

Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you, Senator, for that answer. And, CI is funded pretty much through bond funds through the State of Connecticut?

Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Yes. Thank you, Senator. Senator Hartley, would you care to respond?

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH):

Yes. Thank you, Mr. President, and through you. Yes, and then they also have revolving funds too, which they have within their agency.
Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Hartley. Senator Formica, you have the floor.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. And, I thank the good Senator for her answers. If the dollars measured are good enough for Senator Hartley, who has a pension for measuring dollars, then I suppose they’re good enough for me.

Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, Senator.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Will you remark further on the amendment? Will you remark further? I’m seeing none. Will -- I’m seeing none. We’ll try your minds. All in favor, please indicate by saying, aye. (All) Aye. Opposed? The amendment carries. Senator Hartley. Senate A is adopted. Senator Hartley.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. And, upon the adoption of Senate A, without objection, I would ask that this be put on the Consent Calendar, sir? Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Hartley. The item has been moved for placement on our Consent Calendar. Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH):
I support the Consent Calendar. I just wanted to add that I wanted to acknowledge that Senator Cohen and myself as part of the Bioscience Caucus is working very hard to support the Bioscience Initiative, and I wanted to acknowledge Senator Cohen’s good work on that and also our commitment as a caucus to support this endeavor as well.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. As said, the item has been moved for placement on our Consent Calendar. Is there objection? I’m seeing none. The bill as amended will be placed on our Consent Calendar. Mr. Majority Leader.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, if we can now call an item that I had previously marked PT? Calendar page 20, Calendar 279, Senate Bill 1000?

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

CLERK:

Page 20, Calendar No. 279, Senate Bill No. 1000, AN ACT CONCERNING APPLE ASSESSMENTS. There are amendments.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Senator Cohen, distinguished Chair of the Environment Committee.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):
Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I move acceptance of the Joint Committee’s favorable report and passage of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. The bill has been moved. Will you remark? Senator Cohen.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):

Yes. Thank you, Mr. President. So, this bill seeks to provide equity and fairness around apple assessments that are imposed on apple growers throughout the state. The Connecticut Apple Marketing Board, also known as CAMB, in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture place a small fee on apple growers that produce an excess of 1000 bushels per year for the purposes of marketing and promotion of these Connecticut-grown products. The current formula has the top growers paying in excess of 30 percent towards this fund, so this -- this bill would establish a minimum fee of $100 dollars, again, placed on those growers who produce an excess of 1000 bushels or 1000 for-sale units. It has widespread support in the apple grower community. Mr. President, the clerk is in possession of an amendment, LCO 8834. I would ask that the clerk please call the amendment.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

CLERK:

LCO No. 8834, Senate Schedule A.
Senator Cohen.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, this amendment seeks to allow those with a manufacturer permit for hard cider --

THE CHAIR:

Senator Cohen, if you could just move the amendment first?

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):

Oh, yeah. I move adoption of the amendment.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Please proceed.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):

[Laughing]. Sorry about that. So, this amendment seeks to allow those with a manufacturer’s permit for hard cider to sell their cider on premises by the glass. Additionally, it would allow holders of said permit to apply for a liquor catering permit in order to provide their products at various events within the state. It’s a pro-business amendment that addresses the fact that cider was sort of left out -- and hard cider rather -- was left out in consideration of original liquor law. I think it’s a good amendment, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

THE CHAIR:

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, a few questions through you to the proponent of the amendment, please?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Miner, please proceed.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, through you, so the amendment as I read it has to do with the production of cider and not apple assessments; is that correct?

Through you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Cohen.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):

That is correct. Through you, Mr. President. The amendment has to do with hard apple cider.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Miner, you have the floor.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. I thank the gentle lady for that clarification. So, it’s not only cider, it’s alcohol-related cider, and under the amendment, would apple -- all apple producers be able to produce apple cider, and in this case, hard apple cider?

Through you, Mr. President.
THE CHAIR:
Yes. Thank you, Senator Miner. Senator Cohen, would you care to respond?

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):
Yes. Thank you, Mr. President, and through you, those who have a manufacturer permit or apply for a manufacturer permit for the production of cider would indeed be able to produce hard cider.

THE CHAIR:
Thank you, Senator Cohen. Senator Miner, you have the floor, sir.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):
And, through you, Mr. President. As it’s outlined here, it looks as though there may be an opportunity for consumption on premises in -- in those cases where the apple cider -- hard apple cider may have been subject to some farm permit associated strictly with cider and not an alcoholic version of cider -- would -- I guess it’s a cidery -- would they be able to make this step without actually going back to a local Planning and Zoning commission and have the conversation or could P and D commission require them to come back to have a conversation about what’s outlined in this amendment if it wasn’t done as part of a regular farm operation?

Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:
Thank you, Senator. Senator Cohen, do you care to respond?
SENATOR COHEN (12TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. Yes, and through you. My understanding is that they could simply begin sale by the glass of their product that they are currently manufacturing hard cider; however, certainly, just as with any business seeking to do some renovation around that business should they want to expand and include a bar for instance, then that certainly would require Planning and Zoning approval.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Senator Miner, you have the floor.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. So, I just wanted to be clear with regard to what this amendment does and what it doesn’t do. We’re not saying in this amendment, through you Mr. President, that if someone is approved for a cider mill and they’ve never produced hard cider at that mill, they would not be able to begin that production with the passage of this amendment unless they had a manufacturer’s permit to those premises as well?

Through you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Miner. Senator Cohen.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):

Thank you, Mr. President, and through you. Yes. That is my understanding.
THE CHAIR:
Thank you, Senator Cohen. Senator Miner, you have the floor.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):
And -- and lastly, through you, Mr. President. So, if the Planning and Zoning approval for the sale of cider didn’t include hard cider, the Planning and Zoning commission wouldn’t lose any authority by the passage of this language; is that correct?

Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:
Senator Cohen, do you care to reply?

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):
Thank you, Mr. President. That would be my understanding.

THE CHAIR:
Thank you, Senator Cohen. Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):
Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I thank the gentle lady for her responses. We did not hear in the Environment Committee this additional language with regard to hard cider, and I wonder, through you, if the gentle lady knows whether this language was heard in some other committee or is a part of some other bill that was heard, at which time a municipality or Planning and Zoning commission may have been represented either by cost or CPM, and someone would have been able to address that?
Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Miner. Senator Cohen, would you care to reply?

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):

Yes. Thank you, Mr. President, and through you. Yes. Indeed, this is currently part of a bill -- a liquor permitting bill that has yet to come before the Senate or the House, and it was also a part of a bill that I had introduced early on in the session. It was heard before the General Law Committee, and this language was in place in -- in that bill prior to that hearing.

Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Cohen. Senator Miner, you have the floor.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. I thank the gentle lady for her response. I don’t sit on the General Law Committee, and I’m not sure if there’s anybody here that does, but certainly, if there was no opposition at that time to this language aside from the fact that it’s part of a larger bill that we’ve yet to take action on here, it does seem to me that it goes hand-in-hand certainly with the production of hard cider and alcohol-related cider, and this seems to open up an opportunity for those places that are appropriately permitted to sell for consumption by the glass as opposed as just in a container. I’m
not sure if there’ll be any other comments on this amendment, but I’ll certainly listen.

Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Miner. Would you remark further on the amendment? Would you remark further on Senate Amendment Schedule A? Senator Berthel.

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND):

Good afternoon, Mr. President. Good to see you up there. I have just a quick question to the proponent of the bill please -- the amendment please?

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Please propose your question.

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND):

Thank you, Mr. President. Through you, in looking at the amendment, I’m just wondering if there is -- and if I have missed it or if it is covered in a subsection, I apologize ahead of time -- but I’m wondering if there is any provision for the taxation of the sale of hard cider on these -- on the premises of these places where it will be sold. I see that there’s a requirement for a catering liquorizing permit, and I don’t know if there is any provision in that permit for the collection of Connecticut taxes on alcohol?

Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Senator Cohen.
SENATOR COHEN (12TH):

Thank you, Mr. President, and through you. I believe that this would be subject to taxation just as through the -- with the taxation requirements on liquor through Connecticut general statutes currently, so this is an addition to that statute.

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND):

Okay.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Cohen. You have the floor, Senator Berthel.

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND):

Thank you, Mr. President. So, through you, just for clarification. We -- we are of the opinion that the permit that would be issued in order for the apple producer to sell cider and apple wine manufactured on the premises by the glass for consumption, etc., etc. is covered by -- by the permit -- the taxation of those sales is covered by the permit? Just for clarification.

Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Senator Cohen.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):

Yes. Thank you, Mr. President, and through you, yes.

THE CHAIR:
Thank you, Senator Cohen. Senator Berthel, you have the floor.

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND):

Thank you, Mr. President. That’s all I have. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Will you remark further on the amendment? Will you remark further on Senate Amendment Schedule A? I’m seeing none. We’ll try your minds. All in favor, please indicate by saying, aye. (All) Aye. A little more please [Laughing]. (All) Aye. All right [Laughing]. All opposed? The ayes have it. The amendment is adopted. The Senate will stand at ease for just a moment.

[Pause]. [Change of Chair].

Good evening. Will you remark? Will you remark? Senator Miner -- or that would be Senator Sampson. Senator Sampson, good evening.

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH):

Good evening, Madam President. So, I’m just listening to the discussion about the bill before us. It’s rare that I’m at a complete loss on what to do when there’s a bill before the Chamber, but that’s where I am, to be honest, in this particular case because I don’t really know much about this subject, and it so happens that I have five orchards that are in my district according to a document that was just shared with me that show all of the folks that are participating in this program. One of them happens to be Rogers Orchards in Southington, which
is the largest producer on the list, and also the one paying the largest amount, and then there are four smaller orchards. And, my understanding is that if we make this change to put a floor dollar amount for the fee that they are charged at $100 dollars, that is going to potentially decrease the amount of fee that Rogers Orchards might pay but increase the fee for the four other farms. The thing that I’m concerned with most is I haven’t heard from any of them, so I don’t know whether any of them like this idea or don’t like it, and it’s a difficult thing to try and make a vote under those circumstances. I had my aid try and reach out to Rogers Orchards today, but they were unsuccessful.

So, I do have a couple of questions, Madam President, for the proponent that might help me make a determination on how to vote; if I could?

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed. Senator Cohen, prepare yourself.

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH):

Thank you, Madam President. I guess the first question I would ask is how did this particular legislation come to us?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Sampson. Senator Cohen.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):

Thank you, Madam President, and through you. This legislation came to us by -- through the Department of Agriculture in conjunction with the Connecticut
Apple Marketing Board. They did testify at the public hearing and are in support of this legislation.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Cohen. Senator Sampson.

SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH):

Excellent. I appreciate that answer. So, was there a number of people that came to testify in favor of this legislation and why the change?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Cohen.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):

Thank you, Madam President, and through you. So, the change comes about as there are several apple growers. In fact, I believe on the document that my good colleague has in his possession there are 33 apple growers that produce in excess of 1000 bushels in the state at least as of last year, and we see that through this list that a very small percentage of them are paying the bulk of the assessment, and that assessment is used for the marketing of apple products, Connecticut grown products throughout the state. It’s a valuable fund that they are all paying into. However, the smaller growers, those that are still in excess of producing 1000 bushels but not really producing many more are being assessed at a much smaller rate; yet, the reap the benefits of this marketing and promotion through this fund, and so the Connecticut Apple Marketing
Board held several meetings, and through those meetings it was determined that they would like to increase the assessment on the smaller growers to a minimum of $100 dollars; thereby, creating more equity in this assessment, and again, there was no opposition to the bill. In fact, the chairman of the Connecticut Apple Marketing Board is one of the smaller growers that gets assessed very little. In fact, only $53 dollars last year, and yet, he wrote us a letter during our public hearing in support of this bill.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Cohen. Senator Sampson. The Senate will stand at ease for just a moment.

[Pause].

Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I’m just going to momentarily FT this bill so we can have a point of personal privilege, and I’d like to yield to Senator Flexer.

THE CHAIR:

Very good. We’ll have Senator Flexer speak. Senator, good evening.

SENATOR FLEXER (29TH):

Good evening, Madam President. Nice to see you this evening.

THE CHAIR:

Nice to see you.
SENATOR FLEXER (29TH):

Madam President, I rise for a point of personal privilege and an introduction.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed. I see we have a very important person in our Chamber.

SENATOR FLEXER (29TH):

Yes. We do, Madam President. Madam President, this evening, we are joined by the 16th incoming President of the University of Connecticut, Thomas Katsouleas, and I’m so grateful that he is here with us today. He has spent the bulk of his day here with us in the State Capitol and has learned a great deal about the General Assembly. We are thrilled that he is going to be leading our state’s flagship university. Thomas was educated like me at a community college, and then studied at UCLA, another tremendous public institution of higher education on the other side of the country, so I know his commitment to public higher education is strong. He is currently the provost and executive vice-president at the University of Virginia, and we are thrilled that he is here today and thrilled that he is going to be leading our university. I am proud to have the main campus of the University of Connecticut in Storrs in our Senate district, but I know that everyone in this Chamber has UCONN students, UCONN alum, and many of you have different campuses of the university in your district, so I would ask that the Chamber please rise and give our new UCONN President a very warm welcome. [Applause].
THE CHAIR:

Thank you very much, Senator Flexer. [Applause]. And, Mr. President, may I say [Speaking Greek] to you. I am a very proud Greek-American. We are very proud to have you. Governor Lamont and I were thrilled that you accepted this new position. We are very excited for our flagship state University. We know that you are the right leader, and may I say your government relations staff, including my sister Gail, are just awesome, and I hope that you appreciate that because she is here working very hard to make sure that the University of Connecticut gets very strong funding, and I am sure she is doing a terrific job at that along with her colleague Joanne Lombardo, so you are well represented here, and know that they are taking care of the University of Connecticut’s interest with great aplomb. So, welcome, and I hope that you are having a great evening at the legislature. Thank you so much, and good luck to you. [Speaking Greek].

All right, so with that, perhaps we can get back to our work. Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President, and again, welcome to our new UCONN President. Certainly, grateful that you’re here in our Chamber. Thank you, sir, for being here, and the rest of the UCONN team. We’re very, very proud of our flagship university.

Madam President, the bill I just previously marked PT, if we can mark that as go again, and I would yield to Senator Cohen, please?

THE CHAIR:
So, noted. Senator Cohen, and we will ask if anyone will remark further on the bill? Senator Formica.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH):
Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:
Thank you.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH):
Good afternoon. Good early evening. Senator Sampson is complete with his and we are looking for new conversation.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:
Thank you very much.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH):
Thank you.

THE CHAIR:
Okay. Good.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH):
A question -- a question or a comment for the proponent, please?

THE CHAIR:
Certainly. Please proceed.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH):
This is -- good afternoon, Senator. This is the Connecticut Apple Marketing Association?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Cohen.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):

Thank you, Madam President, and through you. This is the Connecticut Apple Marketing Board, also known as CAMB.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH):

Okay. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Senator -- Senator Formica.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH):

Thank you, Madam President. And, the Department of Agriculture funds the -- the marketing board as a portion of their agency?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Senator Cohen.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):

Thank you, Madam President, and through you. The board is appointed by the commissioner. It’s comprised of six apple produces, three from the West of the river and three from the East of the river. CAMB in statute the -- the assessment can be set by
the commissioner after 6 cents per sale unit. They must be approved. However, in practice, the commissioner who sits on the Connecticut Apple Marketing Board works very closely with the board, and they set the assessments together.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Cohen. Senator Formica.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH):

Thank you, and thank you, Madam President. And, does the Commissioner of Department of Agriculture have a peach marketing board and a --

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Cohen.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):

Thank you, Madam President, and through you. No. I do not believe there is a peach marketing board.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Formica.

Thank you, Madam President. So, I don’t mean to be funny, but it just seems one product of all of the products the Department of Agriculture oversees has a marketing board that’s not funded by the Department of Agriculture. Are these folks who serve on this board paid from the Department of Agriculture?

Through you, Madam President.
THE CHAIR:
Senator Formica to Senator Cohen.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):
Thank you, Madam President, and through you. No. they are not paid by the commissioner.

THE CHAIR:
Senator Formica.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH):
Thank you, Madam President. Thank you, Senator. So, the assessment that is made on these is a voluntary assessment that these businesses that I have a list of here -- some are very small businesses, some are larger in terms of the number of bushels that are produced -- are these numbers for assessment voluntary or they are mandatory once the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture decides what they are?
Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:
Senator Cohen.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):
Thank you, and through you, Madam President. The Connecticut Apple Marketing Board reviews pricing together. They have regular meetings, and they vote to approve the assessment that they determine is the right assessment for the group. They all reap the benefits of some fabulous marketing and promotion around Connecticut grown products. In fact, many other food growers reap those benefits as well.
because it is not only for Connecticut apple products but really Connecticut grown products on the whole.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Cohen. Senator Formica.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Thank you, Senator. I’m sure the marketing board does -- does a great job. I only question why we have a marketing board that is a mandatory assessment by people who work there and go through a government agency. I will talk a little bit later I’m sure about the Connecticut Restaurant Association or any number of other associations through which businesses can choose to participate and elect a board from members within who wish to volunteer at a higher level. The members then pay their dues to the board, and the board then goes out and does the advertising, so I’m not quite clear as to the purpose of having a statute that would control a marketing board for a group of apple producers or peach producers or fish producers or whatever that the Department of Agriculture would then determine an assessment.

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Formica. Senator Cohen.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):

Thank you, Madam President, and through you. Though I don’t know that that was necessarily a question, I think that my answer to that comment would be that
this was born out of Connecticut apple growers requesting some form of a collaboration with one another, and an effort to really get marketing and promotion going within the state of Connecticut around apple production and pick-your-own environment.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Cohen. Senator Formica.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Thank you for the answer to my comment. I appreciate that. However, I’m -- I’m still not clear why these apple growers -- some of which are listed here -- don’t just have an apple growers association and have a marketing, but why is there a statute that must be there to control this what seemed to be a voluntary opportunity to try to generate interest and more business and advertising for the -- for the Connecticut Apple Growers Association or Connecticut apple growers?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Cohen.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):

Thank you, and through you, Madam President. I don’t know that I have the answer to that question. I don’t have all of the history on the Connecticut Apple Marketing Board that would be necessary to --
to fully and accurately answer the good Senator’s question.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Cohen. Senator Formica.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Thank you, Senator. We -- we just listened to the good Chair of the Commerce Committee talk about Connecticut Innovations, which is a creature funded by this government through bond dollars, etc., and we talked about a marketing program that -- that they were going to do, but that would seem to be an organization that was created by this government or this General Assembly a couple of years ago, and so therefore, I could understand why there might be some opportunity for us to comment on that and to go through a statute. I’m just having a lot of trouble with the Connecticut Apple Marketing folks being under the Department of Agriculture, having a statute under their own, when the peach folks don’t have that and the fish folks don’t have that, and so it just -- I’m -- I’m having difficulty. So, I’m wondering if the good Senator could tell me is -- are their dues to belong that they have to pay or is it simply this assessment that is determined by the commissioner, and it goes to the board, and then the total of these dollars equals the total of advertising that is done from the board or is there other funding that comes to help with advertising?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Formica to Senator Cohen.
SENATOR COHEN (12TH):

Thank you, and through you, Madam President. I am not aware of any other fees that the members of this board pay to the State or the Department of Agriculture in conjunction with being a member of this board. I do know that they -- the assessments provide approximately $7000 dollars, which is used towards marketing and promotion of their products. Something that, again, this board has reviewed and decided to collaborate on and reap the benefits of together as a board who meet regularly. I suspect it was born out of the want and need to collaborate with the Department of Agriculture on ways that they could really get the word out on their products and their business, and get folks excited about and aware of all of the wonderful opportunities we have in the State for Connecticut pick-your-own products, and the other orchard products that might be available as such places.

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Cohen. Senator Formica.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Thank you, Senator. I along with Senator Sampson have some nurseries and farmers that are on this list that live and operate in my district, and one, you know, would see the fees increased, you know, as a result of this, and I quite frankly not heard from them whether they like or don’t like the idea of this fee increase, but my understanding is that the lowered number dollars in here all would increase to a minimum of $100
dollars, and it would drive the higher assessed folks to a lower price?

As a question, through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Formica. Senator Cohen.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):

Thank you, Madam President, and through you. Yes. Your understanding is correct. The minimum assessment would now be $100 dollars, and hopefully, alleviating some of the burdens for the larger assessed orchards. However, as I indicated, the Connecticut Apple Marketing Board can determine what the assessment looks like together. I will tell you that it might alleviate some of your concerns over whether or not your orchard was in favor of this assessment and this change to their assessment in reviewing the Connecticut Apple Marketing Board’s minutes over the past several meetings. In fact, the past four meetings, this topic was on the agenda and discussed at length according to the minutes, and they have voted unanimously to impose this fee—minimum fee of $100 dollars.

Through you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Cohen. Senator Formica.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH):

Thank you, Madam President. And, the board that you speak of, Senator, are all of these people that are on here — the small and the large? They all make up this board or a portion of these folks?
Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Cohen.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):

Through you, Madam President. No. They are not all on the board, but they are made aware of the board’s decisions and minutes through communications.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Cohen. Senator Formica.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH):

Thank you, Madam President, and thank you, Senator, for your answers. I’ll make a closing comment, and I appreciate your -- your generosity in answering my questions. Madam President, this just seems to me to be a little bit of overreach in terms of why do we need, as a General Assembly, to create a statute to allow apple folks to -- to market their wares when we don’t do it everywhere else or unless this is the beginning of what we’re going to do everywhere else, so I’m not sure that -- that I’m on board with this particular idea, and I think that if the apple folks want to get together and spend whatever they want to spend on marketing, then I think they should be able to develop a meeting space, call a meeting, have people together, and then make a decision, but I’m not sure that I understand why we need statutes for that kind of thing.

But, thank you, Madam President. I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts today.
THE CHAIR:
Thank you, Senator Formica. Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):
Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I just have a number of questions, if I might, through you?

THE CHAIR:
Please proceed.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):
Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, our caucus has caused me to go back and look at the statue on apple market orders, and it seems in my read of the apple market orders statute that the commissioner has the authority to change the assessment upon certain occurring meetings provided there is some threshold number of apple producers there, and to be quite honest, during the meeting in the Environment Committee, I don’t think the correspondence from the Commissioner’s office actually directly answered any of the questions that seemed to come from my caucus, and as I read the statutes, the Chair lady’s response that the commissioner didn’t think he had authority previously doesn’t follow the read of the statute. So, under section 22-54q, it does say that the commissioner has the authority upon the submittal of signed petition of 25 percent of the apple producers known to the commissioner. If the gentle lady knows, was such a petition submitted to the commissioner requesting this change?

Through you.
Thank you, Senator Miner. Senator Cohen.

Thank you, and through you, Madam President. This -- the request for legislation did indeed come from the Department of Agriculture, and while I didn’t indicate the commissioner didn’t necessarily know he had the authority, in statute the fees and assessments can be set by the commissioner, and again, after 6 cent per sale unit, they must be approved. However, in -- in practice, the commissioner sits down with the Connecticut Apple Marketing Board and reviews the assessment, and together they determine a path forward, and that’s how it’s been done as of late. That is my understanding.

Through you, Madam President.

Thank you, Senator Cohen. Senator Miner.

Thank you, Madam President. So, with regard to the specific language in 22-54q, the gentle lady is not aware of whether they met the threshold two-thirds present at any meeting when they would have directed the commissioner to change the apple market order?

Through you.

Thank you, Senator Miner. Senator Cohen.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):
Thank you, Madam President, and through you. I am not aware and would have to go through those minutes to determine whether or not that was met.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

And, through you, Madam President. Staying in the same section, it seems to be rather prescriptive, and so once it exceeds the 6 cents, then it requires an even higher threshold. If the gentle lady knows, through you, Madam President, is the current assessment at 6 cents?

Through you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Miner. Senator Cohen.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):

Thank you, Madam President, and through you. I do not know, although I could probably do some math here as we sit, based on the sheet that my good colleague and I both have in front of us.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Cohen. Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

Thank you, Madam President. What my caucus has pointed out to me is that there appears to be a mechanism in place for the Department of Agriculture
to change that assessment on their own, and because they can change it on their own, if you hit one of the triggers, if you hit that level of apple production after which you’re not in the realm of those that have to pay in for advertising -- if it hasn’t hit 6 cents, they he or she has the authority to do this. If you have 6 cents, it seems like you still have the authority, but it requires a higher threshold. So, the question that was asked by Senator Formica I think is pertinent because if it was a board meeting that included 10 out of the 30 producers and the statute is silent as to whether you’re a producer that pays into the market order or whether you are just a producer, this certainly -- this list is a list of those that qualify to contribute, but there are probably far more than this list, and so I think the statute says that it has to be two-thirds of the larger number, and if that’s the case, I question whether this -- this change requested to the statute is an indirect violation of the what’s been laid out, and I don’t know exactly when this market order was established. Sections 22-54a to 22-54n, which must have been apple market orders earlier says that prior to July 1, 1989 those are obsolete, and so it leads me to believe that this has existed for quite sometime in the state of Connecticut.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

And -- and so I think the intent of the bill was to socialize the cost of advertising to a broader pool or at least to a greater degree, but I don’t see anything under the formula that would even permit us
to establish a floor in the hopes of discounting what the formula requires at the upper end. Does the gentle lady know if I’m correct in that reading?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Miner. Senator Cohen.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):

Thank you, Madam President, and through you. What I do know and understand is that there are 70 -- approximately 70 orchards in the state. There are 33 apple growers who last year produced in excess of 1000 bushels. I can see from the quick math that it is not 6 cents per sale unit that is being charged currently, and I do not know whether or not the two-thirds would need to be of the 70 apple growers or the 33 apple growers. I do know, again, that the Connecticut Apple Marketing Board in conjunction with its membership has asked for this statute to be put in place, so they are in favor of it, and we did hear from them during our public hearing of the Environment Committee.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Cohen. Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

Thank you, Madam President. And, so we’re not aware of whether two-thirds of the 30 or two-thirds of the 70 were even present at the time this change was requested. Is that correct?
Through you, Madam president.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Miner. Senator Cohen.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):

I apologize, Madam President. But, could I ask my good colleague to repeat his question for me, please?

THE CHAIR:

Please repeat. Thank you, sir.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

Certainly. Thank you, Madam President. So, am I correct that we are uncertain based on the minutes that you have reviewed whether two-thirds, which is the prerequisite to request a change, whether -- excuse me -- 25 percent of the apple producers known to the commissioner -- whether 25 percent of either the 30 or the 70 were present during those meetings when a decision was made to request of the commissioner that he put forth this change?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Miner. Senator Cohen.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):

Thank you, Madam President, and through you. The Connecticut Apple Marketing Board is comprised of six members that are appointed by the commissioner. They review, they discuss, and -- and talk on behalf of these apple growers within the state, the 70
apple growers and certainly inclusive of the 33 larger apple growers, which we have listed in front of us. I am unsure whether the two-thirds needs to be represented by those 33 or 70 apple growers and not just the six members of which the Connecticut Apple Marketing Board is comprised of.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Cohen. Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, also the statute’s pretty clear that it requires the commissioner to cause a notice of such order change to be published in the Connecticut Law Journal.

Through you, if the gentle lady knows, was that -- was that done? I don’t remember that being disclosed at the time of the public hearing. Through you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Miner. Senator Cohen.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):

Thank you, Madam President, and through you. I do not know.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Cohen. Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):
Thank you, Madam President, and Madam President, if I might through you? So, by establishing a floor meaning that the least an apple producer that would qualify because of the amount of apples they do produce, the least that their assessment would be, would be $100 dollars. I don’t see any section of the statute that actually permits that. Is the gentle lady aware of a section in the statute under the apple market orders that would permit this type of a change?

Through you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Senator Cohen.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):

Thank you, and through you, Madam President. This new proposal that we have in front of us, SB 1000, creates a new assessment.

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Cohen. Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I -- I certainly listened at the time of the public hearing and my recollection was that it was not one of the longer discussions that we had in the Environment Committee, and I would say that while it -- it seems not to track the current statute, I would wonder at this point why there would need to be an elaborate process for which the marketing board could in and of itself make a decision or petition the
commissioner to make a decision if they can just come to the legislature. It seems like when this was established -- and I don’t have the year in which it was established, but I see PA 84, so I’m assuming it’s been since then, that it was set up in the way it was so that every member -- every producer could participate in that conversation, and being as there wasn’t a lot of communication, I’m imaging that some of the people felt that it wasn’t going to affect them. We don’t have any evidence so to speak that they were notified. There’s nothing that I remember that anything was actually published. I don’t know what’s required in terms of notification of the meeting or the minutes of the meeting, but it certainly seems clear to me that this method of assessment is not consistent with the formula that was developed in the beginning, and if in fact, we haven’t hit 6 cents per unit, I guess I would wonder at this point why we aren’t just directing the commissioner to go back and meet with this board and determine what the assessment should be in terms of how many cents for the apples that qualify under production?

I do know that at the time we met for the first time to consider requests made by the various commissioners, I believe, there was an interim commissioner, and I further believe the interim commissioner wasn’t really even doing the talking. I think there was a former staffer for the commissioner that was making a presentation. And, so given the fact that the commissioner was in flux, there was a new governor, there hadn’t been a permanent appointment, we now have a commissioner, I wonder why we wouldn’t be better off just remanding this at this point back to the commissioner and having him investigate whether or not a more
appropriate assessment should be established rather than us establishing an artificial floor of $100 dollars, when the statute when it was originally constructed and has been changed a number of times, never contemplated a floor price before? So, I know there were a number of other questions in the caucus that I tried to answer. I do know that the gentle lady has worked hard on this language and on the bill. I think she’s worked with at least her constituents and some of ours, but having said all of that, I wonder whether the best action would be not to take action at least in terms of establishing that floor if there is another mechanism that we could direct them to go back and avail themselves of and do it the way it was originally contemplated?

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Miner. Will you remark further? Senator Fasano.

SENATOR FASANO (34TH):

Thank you, Madam President. And, following the remarks of Senator Miner, I guess the question is why is the legislature dipping their hands into this business to determine what the appropriate fee schedule should be? why can’t the apple growers amongst themselves be able to make that determination? We have a process, as I understand it, under 22-54o(p)(q) that allow the organization to operate within its own rules with the commissioner, and give it the ability to change the rates, and it seems to me that just the other day when I talked about the need for quasi to be reviewed and paperwork to be transmitted, the
pushback from some folks in this circle was you’re making it too cumbersome. Well, clearly anytime they want to make a change to the apples, they would have to wait for us to be in session, give us a bill, have a public hearing, get it out of committee, make its way to various other committees, get in front of the legislature, be approved, and then signed by the governor, and then have an effective date. Well, if my request of sending reports to OPM was somewhat cumbersome, clearly this process has to be cumbersome.

And, once again, government doesn’t know the answers, and we can’t act swiftly, so I say perhaps the way of doing it is leave it to the free marketplace, and leave it to the growers to determine what’s appropriate, and I’ll give you the example. What if this Fall we have something -- a drought, something that affects the apples considerably? Maybe the organization would say a decimation to the apple orchard by infestation or what have you would cause a chance to the fee because the money that they thought was coming in wasn’t coming in. Well, they would have to make the fee or hold up, wait for us to get back into session, and go through the whole process again. I say let’s untie their hands. Let’s let them pick the methodology for which they want to govern themselves. This is not uncommon. No pun intended but comparing apple-to-apples, it would be the tourism board that we allow people to join the tourism board, they set their own rules based upon percentages that they would do. Another example would be CCM or cost, so those are examples of how we let the free marketplace determine what’s in the best interest of the organization. So, with that, I would ask the clerk to call LCO 8935.
THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

SENATOR FASANO (34TH):

Did I say it right? 8935, Mike? You don’t have 8935? 8935. Yeah, that one. Try that one and see what happens with that one.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):

How about them apples? [Laughter].

SENATOR FASANO (34TH):

All right.

CLERK:

LCO No. 8935, Senate Schedule A.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Fasano.

SENATOR FASANO (34TH):

I request permission to summarize and move the amendment?

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed.

SENATOR FASANO (34TH):

Thank you. To get to the core of the problem I think -- [ Interruption]

CLERK:

LCO No. 8935, Senate Schedule B.
THE CHAIR:

Senator Fasano.

SENATOR FASANO (34TH):

Okay. I move the amendment and request permission to summarize?

THE CHAIR:

Yes. Please. Please proceed to summarize.

SENATOR FASANO (34TH):

So, what this amendment does is seek to get to the core of the problem. What it does is it -- is an attempt to repeal the apple provision of 22-54r. [Laughter]. So, Madam President, as a seed for thought, if we were to allow the apple orchard folks to get together and bring their ideas to the organization and say this is how we want to govern ourselves, this is how we think it should be done, let’s let them do that. Let’s allow them the right to organize themselves and set the rules appropriately to achieve the best harvesting of the ideas so that they can get their business to where they want it to be without governmental interference. So, Madam President, as I said by repealing 22-54r, it would allow the organization to exist under the preceding sections, and allow these ideas to come in, govern themselves, and move them accordingly and work fast towards that end.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator --
SENATOR FASANO (34TH):
I request a roll call vote. I apologize.

THE CHAIR:
Yes. A roll call will indeed be ordered. Will you remark further on the amendment? Senator Cohen.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH):
Thank you, Madam President. And, in keeping with my good colleague’s fun puns, while his amendment may have some appeal to some, I would stand in opposition to the amendment and remind everybody that the chairman of the Connecticut Apple Marketing Board did in fact provide testimony to us in favor of the underlying bill, and I worry that he is in fact a small apple grower, so I want to remind everybody of that, so his assessment would be impacted. He would, in fact, be paying more under this legislation, and he is in favor of it, and as requested that the legislature move passage. I worry that without this bill in place Connecticut grown products, specifically Connecticut apple products will be hurt as right now they have a great system in place with which they pay into a kitty -- if you will -- for the use of -- for the purpose of marketing and promotion of our wonderful Connecticut grown products, so I urge my colleagues to vote no on this amendment.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:
Thank you, Senator Cohen. Will you remark further on the amendment that is before us? Senator Somers.
SENATOR SOMERS (18TH):

Thank you, Madam President. And, I rise in support of this amendment because I do agree with Senator Fasano that it seems almost unnecessary what we’re doing here, and I have to ask the question -- maybe these apple growers would be better served if they actually didn’t include the state of Connecticut in their marketing because we’ve seen how well we’ve done with our tourism slogans, etc. Maybe they would be actually better served if they worked with -- pooled their money, got together, and made a decision to use a private industry expert rather than the Department of Ag that actually might work to their benefit, and I do think it’s strange that we have this just for one particular farming organization and not others as it’s been pointed out, and I’m concerned that some of the smaller orchards -- even though we’ve heard from the good Senator that some of them have agreed -- that they are actually at a disadvantage. It looks to me from looking at this like one of the larger growers will actually reap the benefit and the smaller growers that are not producing quite as many apples will actually pay the difference, so I support this amendment. I think it’s a wise decision, and putting the power back into the actual growers and the business folks’ hands on their own to decide their marketing I think is the best way to go.

Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Cohen. Will you remark further on the amendment that is before us? Senator Martin.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST):
Thank you, Madam President. Good evening. I rise in support of the amendment as well. You know, I don’t know too much about the apple industry, but you know, when it first -- we first started screening it in caucus, I just raised an eyebrow immediately wondering why are we -- why are we involved in an organization that -- who is sort of assessing themselves and it -- I don’t know if they’re using the State of Connecticut as an administratively to -- to market. Don’t know that for sure, but I just didn’t get it, and I just felt that these are a bunch of small businesses that if they’re meeting together they should be -- form an organization, not through the State of Connecticut, no different than the Board of Realtors, no different than the -- you know, I heard the good Senator Formica talk about the fish market industry. It just didn’t -- I just didn’t feel or think that this is not our job as a state to be in the middle of this. If these guys wanted to get together and be an industry and market themselves, that’s the way it should be. So, I’m in support of this Amendment B.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you so much, Senator Martin. Will you remark further? Senator Miner for the second time.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

Thank you, Madam President, but I think this is the first time on this Amendment.

THE CHAIR:

First time on the Amendment. I stand corrected.
SENATOR MINER (30TH):

No, no. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

So, Madam President, when I asked the questions earlier about how the vote was taken with respect to the current statute, it was the -- it was the crux to the problem I think we were having in our caucus that -- that while there seemed to be a well though out statute currently in place and we couldn’t determine at least whether there was still some opportunity to increase the assessment, we could determine, based on our read of the statute that establishing a floor really wasn’t contemplated by apple producers. At least it hadn’t been contemplated up until now. If I recall, the gentle lady, she didn’t know if there were 25 percent or two-thirds of 30 or 70 or all the apple producers in the state, and frankly, I wouldn’t expect her to know because I don’t think we got that information.

I think the amendment currently before us is appropriate for a number of reasons. One is that apple producers have the ability to make these decisions on their own. The statute is clear that the money paid in is not to be considered general fund money. It stays within this organization for the purposes that they decide, so my read of the statute at this point is that we don’t need to be collecting. We don’t need to be in that business. If they want to assess themselves, if they want to change the assessment in some way, the rest of the
statute allows them an opportunity to do that. I do remember that the acting commissioner at some point had opined that they thought it should be a broader group of people, that the assessment should include others, and I think the committee, certainly the leadership of the committee pushed back and said, no we don’t want it to affect even smaller producers. So, that leads me to believe that even the agency at that time didn’t really understand what authority they had. So, I do support the amendment. The list that was provided to us seems to indicate that at least one individual has not yet paid or hadn’t yet paid. I don’t know if they’ve currently paid or not paid, but they’re one of the largest apple producers there are. And, so Madam President, while I do support kind of a collective effort to advertise and I do want to make sure that apple produce in Connecticut have a place in the Connecticut market and outside the Connecticut market, I’m not sure that the statute as it’s currently being administered is what was intended, and that’s why I think the amendment is appropriate and that it should be adopted and allow the individuals that produce apples in the State of Connecticut to establish their own assessment, to make determinations on how they want to spend the money with regard to advertisements in state, out of state, and so on.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Miner. Will you remark further on the amendment? Senator Formica.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH):
Thank you, Madam President. Good evening.

THE CHAIR:

Good evening.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH):

I rise in support of the amendment, which I think I won't belabor the point, but it speaks to the conversation we had earlier with regard to whether we need to be in this business or not in this business to Senator Miner's point. You know, as I said earlier, we had a couple of very large apple producers in East Lyme, and you know, I enjoyed taking my young children there and enjoying all the things that happened in and around picking your own apples and all of the festivities that they would have, so I understand the importance of moving awareness for this program because it's a short season and because there's an opportunity to have some fun while you're doing some business, but you know, there's also an ice cream trail that's through the tourism marketing program in the State of Connecticut. There's an antique trail, but we don't do the same thing with those businesses as we are here with the apple business, so I just think that this is a little much. I think the opportunity has been heard, is there in the statute for them to proceed to market their apples.

But, I thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity to share my voice. Thank you, Madam.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Formica. Will you remark further? Senator Fasano.
SENATOR FASANO (34TH):

Thank you, Madam President, and for the second time. The Chairman of the Connecticut Apple Marketing Board is a great guy, and I think he does wonderful work, and I think his heart and soul is in the right place. And, although he spoke in favor of this bill, that doesn’t necessarily mean he would be against a provision that struck the portion that this amendment speaks to. It just means that in front of him was a proposal, and given the scenario, he was in favor of that proposal. I don’t know if he’d have a different result should the option had been to get rid of the statute. Nevertheless, Madam President, it speaks to the ability to allow this industry to govern themselves, regulate themselves, and then also move more quickly with respect to the adaptation of environmental issues or a bad crop or what have you.

So, Madam President, I urge adoption. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Senator Cohen. Will you remark further? Will you remark further? If not, Mr. Clerk, would you kindly call for a roll call vote and the machines will be open?

CLERK:

Immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate. Immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate. Senate Bill 1000, Senate Amendment B, LCO No. 8935. Immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate, Senate Bill 1000, Senate Amendment B, LCO No. 8935. Immediate roll call vote in the Senate. Immediate roll call vote has been
ordered in the Senate. Immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate, Senate Amendment B, LCO No. 8935. Immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

Have all the Senators voted? Have all the Senators voted? The machine will be closed, and would the clerk please announce the tally?

CLERK:

Senate Bill 1000, Senate Amendment B, LCO No. 8935.

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THE CHAIR:

The amendment fails. Will you remark further on the bill before us? Will you remark further? If not, we will call for a roll call vote. Mr. Clerk, if you would kindly call the vote, and the machine will be open?

CLERK:

Immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate on Senate Bill 1000, as amended by Senate A. Immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate on Senate Bill 1000 as amended by Senate A. Immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate. Immediate roll call vote in the Senate. Immediate roll call vote in the Senate.
THE CHAIR:

Have all the Senators voted? Have all the Senators voted? The machine will be locked, and the clerk would please announce the tally?

CLERK:

Senate Bill 1000, as amended by Senate A.

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THE CHAIR:

Legislation is adopted. Mr. -- Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Will the Senate stand at ease for a moment?

THE CHAIR:

The Senate will stand at ease.

[Pause].

Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, if we can go to the next item on our go list, please?

THE CHAIR:

Yes. Mr. Clerk, please call that item.
SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Mr. -- Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Yes.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. I just want to make sure that our -- I may need to just change the order. Our next item should be Calendar page 43, Calendar 478, House Bill 7364.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

CLERK:


THE CHAIR:

Senator Bradley.

SENATOR BRADLEY (23RD):

Thank you, Madam President. I ask this vote -- excuse me, Madam President. I move the acceptance of Joint Committee and favorable report and passage of this bill.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. The question is on passage. Will you remark?
SENATOR BRADLEY (23RD):

Thank you. I just want to commend the hard work of Senator Cassano, who’s unfortunately not here to be able to present this, and I as Vice-Chair have been delegated this fine duty. This, in essence, would allow the town of Woodbridge a five-year extension on a note that they have there to make them more solvent as a town. As we know, our cities and towns are the backbone of ensuring that Connecticut is moving forward, and I also know that throughout this committee process Senator Maroney has been instrumental in informing us of -- of a lot of the issues that the town of Woodbridge would be facing if the Senate wouldn’t move forward in allowing them this kind of grandfather clause to have this time period, so I want to also highlight and commend the hard work of Senator Maroney.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Bradley. Will you remark further on this legislation? Senator Champagne.

SENATOR CHAMPAGNE (35TH):

Thank you, Madam President. I rise in support of this as well. This is an extension of money that was put forth to help the town of Woodbridge. There is no new funding that will be needed, and I urge all of my colleagues to support this.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Champagne. Will you remark further? Senator Maroney.
SENATOR MARONEY (14TH):

Thank you, Madam President. I just want to thank Senator Champagne and Senator Bradley for the work with the Planning and Development Commission -- Committee on this bill, and I want to thank the Senators. This bill will help the town of Woodbridge in -- as Senator Bradley has mentioned in being fiscally responsible in extending their note. I also would like to thank Senator Logan for his work. It’s been -- we’ve worked with each other on this issue.

So, thank you very much.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Maroney. Will you remark further? Senator Bradley. Ah, Senator Logan. Will you remark?

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH):

Thank you, Madam President. I rise in support of the bill, and I want to also thank everyone. I’m glad to see all the bipartisan support on this matter.

So, thank you very much. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

So noted, Senator Logan. Will you remark further? Senator Bradley.

SENATOR BRADLEY (23RD):

Madam President, if there’s no further objections, I move to place this on the Consent Agenda?
THE CHAIR:
I’m seeing no objection. So, ordered. Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):
Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, we’re going to stand at ease.

THE CHAIR:
The Senate will indeed stand at ease.

[Pause]. [Change of Chair].
The Senate will please come back to order. The Senate will come back to order. Our distinguished Majority Leader, Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):
Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, our next bill is what is supposed to be Calendar page 32, Calendar 448, Senate Bill 3. I’d like to just PT that and move on to the next bill. We will be returning to that one, but the next bill up is Calendar page 43, Calendar 475, House Bill 5004.

THE CHAIR:
Thank you, Mr. Majority Leader. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK:
Page 43, Calendar No. 475, House Bill No. 5004, AN ACT INCREASING THE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE. As amended by House Amendment Schedule A, LCO No. 8234.

THE CHAIR:
Distinguished Chair of the Labor Employee’s Committee, Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. I move acceptance of the Joint Committee’s favorable report and passage of the bill in concurrence with the House of Representatives.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. The bill has been moved in concurrence with the House. Will you remark? Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

Certainly. Thank you, Mr. President. This bill will increase the minimum wage here in Connecticut starting on October 1, 2019, to $11 dollars, September 1, 2020, it will go to $12 dollars, August 1, 2021, $13 dollars, July 1, 2022, $14 dollars, and June 1, 2023, it will go to $15 dollars. After such time, it will be indexed starting January 1, by the employment cost index. This bill also changes the training wage to a new wage that will be established for persons who are 16 and 17 years of age. They will earn the greater of $10.10 an hour or 85 percent of the minimum wage for a period of up to 90 days. It also provides protections in case of negative growth in the state’s gross domestic product for two consecutive quarters, at which time the DOL will issue a report and recommendation to the governor, and the governor then will make recommendations and can recommend the suspension of scheduled increases to the General Assembly. Furthermore, it freezes the employer’s share of the minimum wage. For those who are tipped wage
earners, it will freeze that at $6.38 for hotel and restaurant workers who are most often receiving gratuities, and for bartenders $8.23. It provides that no worker shall face displacement or reduction of hours so that the employer can hire a younger worker and pay the subminimum wage. It also provides for a study by DOL of tipped workers that will look at patterns for tipped workers, and that study will be due no later than January 17, 2020.

So, that is the substance of the bill. I have to say it’s a great honor for me to be standing here in this Chamber bringing to you the new minimum wage bill. I have spent my entire life fighting on behalf of workers, and it’s an incredible honor to now be in a position to lift the wages of so many of our state’s workers and -- and get them closer to what would be a living wage, so I urge all of my colleagues to vote for passage of this bill, and I think that’s a good summary.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you very much, Senator Kushner. Would you remark further on the bill, which is before us in concurrence with the House of Representatives?

Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. So, is the bill before us as amended from the House?

Through you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Kushner.
SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

That’s correct. This is the bill that passed the House last week.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Miner, you have the floor.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. And, so if I could, a couple more questions to the Chairwoman of the Labor Committee, please?

Through you.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. So, if my recollection is correct, the bill that was in the Labor Committee had an effective date or at least a start date upon which the increase would occur, as I recall was January 1, 2020; is that correct?

Through you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

That is correct.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Miner, you have the floor.
SENATOR MINER (30TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. And, under the bill that passed the house, if I understand it correctly, that effective date is moved up to October 1, which would be this coming October; is that correct?

Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

That is correct.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

And, through you, if the gentle lady could tell the Chamber what was the reasoning behind moving the start date up I think it’s about four months earlier?

Through you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Kushner, would you care to reply?

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. Yes. We did this in response to some -- from what we heard from both small businesses and other businesses here in Connecticut and of our colleagues that they would prefer keeping the increases under a dollar, and they would prefer extending it over five increments.
THE CHAIR:

Thanks, Senator Kushner. Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. And, so the way to accomplish that was to start the clock earlier as opposed to extending it from the original state date of January 1? Mr. President, through you, in the second section of the bill starting on line 33, there is some -- some verbiage here that talks about establishing a fair minimum wage. Under no scenario within this bill as I read it, can that fair minimum wage be less than what is in section 1? Am I correct in that reading?

Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

Yes. The minimum wage in the State of Connecticut is established in section 1, item -- in the first section there.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Miner, you have the floor.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

Thank -- thank you, Mr. President. And, so as I continue on reading through the bill, there seemed to be some other point in time at which the minimum wage is able to be less than the established minimum wage in section 1. If the gentle lady could explain to the Chamber how is it that those other scenarios
are permitted when the plain language on line 33 and 34 say that the minimum fair wage needs to be what’s in that schedule?

Through you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

I believe that section that you’re referring to on line 33 is followed by words that are important to suggest that if it were to go -- it could go up in effect if the federal minimum wage was increased, but I assume you are talking about other places where there’s a set minimum wage articulated?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

So, I am aware that there are provisions under the federal law if we were to be below the federal minimum wage at any point that we would be required to increase. But what I’m asking about is if there are section in the bill that seem to allow for a payment of minimum wage that is less than the schedule? And, I think this is the only opportunity the public gets a chance to make it clear that if they fit in one of these other categories there is a wage raise below the fair minimum wage as described in section 1 that could be paid and would be applicable without penalty. Am I correct?

Through you, Mr. President.
THE CHAIR:

Senator Miner -- Senator Kushner, just stand at ease for just a moment.

[Pause].

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

Senator Miner, you are correct. There are provisions in this bill for someone to be paid a subminimum wage or be paid according to tipped wage credit schedule.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Miner, you have the floor.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. And, so in section 5, this appears to be one of those areas where although there’s a wage scale for minimum wage, there is also an opportunity for all persons under the age of 18 years to be paid a wage rate of not less than 85 percent of minimum wage for the first 90 days of such employment. So, am I correct, this would be one of those sections that would operate concurrently with this fair minimum wage rate, but it would be 85 percent -- could be 85 percent for those that are under the age of 18?

Through you, Mr. President. Oh, a switch-a-roo. [Laughing]. Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Miner. Please proceed.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):
Thank you, Madam President. I asked the question.

THE CHAIR:

And, Senator Kushner. Good evening. Good to see you. Please respond. Thank you.

SENATOR KUSHER (24TH):

It’s great to see you, Madam President. And, Senator Miner, you are correct. There are circumstances where a person under the age of 18 could be paid 85 percent of the minimum wage.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Am I correct that would be for the first 90 days of such employment?

Through you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHER (24TH):

That would be up to 90 days.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

And, through you, Madam President. Is that 90 eight-hour days or could it be something else?

Through you, Madam President.
THE CHAIR:
Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):
That would be 90 calendar days.

THE CHAIR:
Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):
And, through you, Madam President. Ninety calendar days -- are those 90 calendar days for which someone actually appeared for work and was on a schedule? Through you.

THE CHAIR:
Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):
That would be 90 days from the first date of employment.

THE CHAIR:
Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):
So, given that response, if -- if I ran a hardware store, and I hired someone under the age of 18, and they reported for work on May 1, 90 days after that even if they didn’t actually have another work shift but maybe once a week, that beginning wage would be appropriately paid at 85 percent of minimum wage for no more than 90 calendar days no matter how many
days the individual actually worked at that job? Am I correct?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

That’s correct.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

And, if I could, through you, Madam President? So, I think the starting age at which someone can legally work in the state of Connecticut in different positions is at the age of 14, and so if I hired somebody in that hardware store to clean the shelves at the age of 14, and then after some period of time, that employee decided they didn’t want to work there anymore, they wanted to go try doing something else. Does the next employer have to pay that employee the full rate minimum wage, or are they entitled to hire someone below the age of 18 and the clock starts again with a new employer?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Miner. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):
Give me one moment. It’s 90 days with the same employer. If you move to another employer, it would start over at 90 days.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Kushner. Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

Thank you, Madam President. And, so if that same employee started this summer or the first summer after the effective date of this bill and worked for a period of time during that summer, left employment, and wanted to come back to the hardware store again and instead of being someone that cleaned the counters, did some other task that was a different task, still learning opportunity; would the same employer have an opportunity a year later to the same discount on the wage rate even if it was the same employer the employee had previously been hired at?

Through you.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

Thank you --

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Miner. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

Give me one moment.

THE CHAIR:

Certainly. The Senate will stand at ease.
[Pause].

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

The Senate will be called to order, and Senator Kushner, please proceed.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

After confirming with counsel, I would like to correct an earlier statement. It would be 90 days per employee, so that employee when they work 90 days, once they've completed that 90 days, they would have to be hired at that full minimum wage regardless of whether it was the same employer or a different employer, so regardless of it was that summer or the next summer.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

Now, I'm baffled, Madam President. So, the bill contemplates a learner's wage for someone under the age of 18, and I guess it's not a learner's wage, it's actually forgetting learner's, it says all persons, and that -- if that -- if that individual actually had employment previously and went to someone new, what would be the -- what would be the evidence that someone would show to prove that they had previously been employed or what kind -- yeah, what would the evidence be that they would show that they had previously been employed in the prior summer for instance?
Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

As you pointed out, this is no longer a learner’s or beginner’s wage. It’s now applied to all persons under the age of 18, and I believe that the Department of Labor will have to come up with guidelines for how they can establish that with the next employer.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Kushner. Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

And -- and through you, Madam President. There’s some language on line 54 and 55 that speaks to institutional training programs as being exempted by the commissioner. If the gentle lady could describe for the Chamber what those might be?

Through you, please.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Miner. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

That’s existing language in statute, and I know that it has referenced waivers that the federal government has given out to certain institutional training programs.

THE CHAIR:
Thank you, Senator Kushner. Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

And, through you, Madam President. So, in those cases where it was previously existing language and there may have been a discount or a reduced wage rate pay that was acceptable to the commissioner, in all cases, will those still exist?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Miner. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

This bill does not change the underlying bill except where noted.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Kushner. Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

Thank you, Madam President, but Madam President, I would argue that I think the bill does change the underlying statute certainly with respect to lines 33 and lines 34 where it says in no event shall the minimum fair wage be less than the amount on the schedule, so what I’m trying to find out is how would someone know whether the institutional training programs that were previously exempted will continue to be exempted? Is there any language in the bill that will give people some comfort so to speak? As I recall, we had testimony provided by parents, caregivers of individuals with special needs that were concerned that by changing the
language we were somehow going to create a scenario where their employment opportunities would be something less, and therefore, their opportunities for socialization, their opportunity for earning some income would somehow be diminished?

Through you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Miner. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

This bill does not change those underlying statute exemptions.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

Thank you, Madam President. So, in the case of those individuals with special needs, if they work for an employer that did peace work and the wage work for that peace work as demonstrated previously was some dollar per hour based on the efficiency, the level of competency, would that still be the same wage rate after the passage of this new language?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Miner. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

The same exemptions and federal waivers that existed will continue to exist.
SENATOR MINER (30TH):

And, if I could, through you, Madam President? When the gentle lady says the same exemptions will exist, are they the same exemptions to the same degree or are they the same exemptions against a higher wage rate as directed in section 1?

Through you, Madam President.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

Where this bill addresses a change in a subminimum wage, I think it addresses it clearly whether it’s based on age, it would be $10.10 or 85 percent, whichever is greater, or the tipped wage credit that is articulated a little later in the bill.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

So, in this case, Madam President, what I’m trying to do is I’m trying to make clear what the circumstances will be for individuals with special needs. So, they’re not tipped wages, they’re a proficiency-established wage, and what I’m trying to get to is whether or not people who are concerned about their loved ones being priced out of a job, whether they would have kind of an equal opportunity for the same number of hours or whether this
language forces a higher wage upon which that
discount would be -- will be taken from?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

I think this bill clearly articulates where there is
a change in the existing statute for a subminimum
wage. I think all other exemptions are written in,
in definitions of the statute in other places in the
statute, and those would continue to exist. If it’s
done as a percentage, it would be -- continue to be
a percentage.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I’m
recalling that there’s some language in here with
regard to displacement. Is it the intention of the
new language to limit the ability of an employer
from reducing the scheduled hours of someone who
might have a higher wage rate because they’re over
the age of 18 if that position can be filled by
someone under the age of 18 at the reduced wage rate
at least during that beginning 90-day period?

Through you.

THE CHAIR:

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

The intention of the bill is to protect such that no employer will take advantage of a subminimum wage and reduce the hours or displace an employee who is over 18 because they have the opportunity to hire someone under the age of 18.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

And, so again, through you, Madam President. In the case that an employer puts up a schedule of work hours and the aggressive younger employee might fill their name into a block of time to work at that hardware store, and that’s been the policy of the store is to let people kind of fill in the schedule at will, if it was later determined that that exercise reduced the number of hours to a more senior employee, what would the mechanism be for that person filing a claim that somehow the employer had created that circumstance where they favored the younger less expensive employee?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Miner. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

The bill calls for the labor commission to make that determination.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Senator Miner.
SENATOR MINER (30TH):

And, through you, Madam President. Is it the obligation of the employee whose hours have been reduced to make that claim and how would they make them to?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

I think the bill makes it clear that it would be the labor commissioner who would make, and that would be the labor commissioner of the DOL to make that determination in cases such as this. In other statutes, it is the responsibility of the person who feels aggrieved to make that claim.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

And, if the gentle lady knows is that language -- I guess is that language part of the current statute or is that new language and have regulations been developed yet to establish how that process will work?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Miner. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):
I’m sorry, Senator Miner. I was distracted for a moment. Are we still talking about the same paragraph?

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

We are.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

Okay. This is new language, and it would be proactive. It would mean that the employer would have to engage in practices to either reduce hours or limit or displace employees, so the example you were using is a little confusing because you gave an example where workers sign up for hours, so this would have to be proven to be a practice of the employer, not the voluntary sign up of hours.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Kushner. Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

And, so as it’s anticipated then in the language, if it was voluntary upon which people signed up on the schedule and it wasn’t directed by the employer, they would still be operating within the confines of a new statute and not subject to a penalty, and that would require a hearing of some sort?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Miner. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):
I think this bill points out very clearly that an employer would have to have an intention. It says for purposes of hiring persons under the age of 18 years of age at a rate below the minimum fair wage, that I believe that would be the language that would show that the employer has to have intent to do that, and they would go to DOL, and I assume there would be a hearing similar to other adjudication processes that currently exist for other aggrieved employees.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Kushner. Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

Thank you, Madam President. I wanted to jump over I guess to camps and camp workers for a moment, if I might? And, so I’m recalling I think during the Appropriations Committee meeting there was an opinion offered that this new language did not affect summer camps. Am I correct with that?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Miner. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

And, the definitions in this section of the statute, it does define employee, and it says employees who are working at a summer camp who is operating for fewer than six months a year would be exempt.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Kushner. Senator Miner.
SENATOR MINER (30TH):

And -- and for those camps that may have a totally separate purpose but still operate let’s say for more than six months. I’m thinking of one that’s in my district. If they continue to operate as they currently do, which is weekend seminars for which people can come and sign up and do scrapbooking or something similar to that, so that the period of time in the calendar that they’re actually functioning during the calendar year is more than six months; does that subject them to the new fair minimum wage for all employees including those that work during the summer months of summer camp?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Miner. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

The employee/employer relationship does not exist for employees who are hired to work at a summer camp that is fewer than six months -- operating fewer than six months of the year.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Kushner. Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

Thank you, Madam President. So, once again, this is -- this is the public’s opportunity to try and get a sense of what this language actually says and what it doesn’t say, and during the testimony in the committee, there was a fair amount of angst expressed over whether or not a change in the fair
minimum wage was going to price some camps out of business, and to the extent that the opinion has been offered that this does not apply to camps that function less than six months or less that exist in the State of Connecticut whether it’s a boy scout camp, a girl scout camp, a YMCA camp, in my case private camps that have found it necessary to provide certain weekend opportunities in order to pay insurance, keep the lights on, maintain the buildings, and so in those cases where they may be open during months beyond what would normally be the summer camp period, all wages would be exempt from this or just the wages that would be paid during that summer camp period?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Miner. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

I want to point out the statute has not changed in this regard, so if a camp was exempt because it operated for fewer than six months in a year, that exemption stays. If there is a discrimination that that camp doesn’t meet the exemption because it’s operating beyond the six months, this bill doesn’t change that.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Kushner. Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

And, so in as much as the statute as it’s proposed here, this bill, doesn’t change the underlying
language with regard to camps, the concern being expressed in my district is that A) They don’t want to follow the law and B) This new schedule is going to cause them hardship to the extent that they aren’t going to be able to run these programs, and if they’re forced to close those weekend opportunities, which put them outside the six months in total, that’s not going to allow them to stay in business. And, so historically, I think the way most camps have interpreted the current statute if the employee lives at the camp, eats with the campers, sleeps on the campus, swims with campers, shoots bows and arrows, plays miniature golf, whatever they do, then they have not historically been subject to the minimum wage standard and that there has always been an understanding that those wages because of all those other things would be less. A camp counselor for instance would not be compensated at a fair minimum wage rate for every hour they were on campus at the camp. Is that going to change through this bill?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Miner. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

This bill does not change the underlying definitions in the statutes, which call for an exemption of camps, and so if they were exempt previously in the circumstances you described, those exemptions would continue.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Kushner. Senator Miner.
SENATOR MINER (30TH):

And, is it fair to say if they have been historical interpretations that have gone unchallenged, if they are now challenged, the outcome of that challenge may be entirely different than the circumstances under which they’ve operated perhaps for the last 50 years?

Through you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Miner. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

I don’t believe this bill changes anything with regard to determinations that for the way the DOL would make determinations as to the way they would handle historic circumstances. I think they would make the decisions in the same way as they do now as they did before.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH):

Thank you, Madam President, and I thank the gentle lady for her answers. Madam President, we’ve -- I think we sat the day of the public hearing in the Labor Committee probably 12 or 14 hours and listened to testimony from individuals that felt the time had come for a wage rate increase, sometimes they were advocates on behalf of a certain class of people. We heard testimony from people that had loved ones that were special needs, young adults that were very concerned that this new wage rate was going to
affect their employability, was going to affect the number of hours that their loved one might be provided, that socialization opportunity, and that was one of the issues that stuck with me, and it does sound to me as though those individuals certainly would be eligible for the higher wage rate. I guess based on the responses if there was no older person that would not benefit from a discounted rate then, you know, there would be no issue there, but at least for purposes of that population, I don’t think there would be any penalty for an employer reducing the number of available hours for that population based solely on the fact that certain tasks get paid certain amounts of money.

Madam President, we heard from a gentleman that runs a large amusement park, and he was concerned that once again this was going to be a problem for him in that in many cases they are -- they are the first job that young people get, and he urged us not to establish a schedule that was too fast, one that didn’t increase too quickly because he as well said that given the economy people only have so much expendable wages to enjoy his amusement park, and therefore, he thought that increasing the rates was going to decrease the number of individuals that came and that that would be, unfortunately, a scenario where they wouldn’t be able to hire the people that they do currently.

Madam President, we heard also from a gentleman that runs a grocery store. There was, I think, a very good dialogue between Chairman Kushner and my constituent, and they were talking about the effects of an increased wage rate, and his ability to price that into the products in his stores, and that more
often than not that increased cost of labor was going to become a basis for an increased cost of goods and the effect that would have not only on this population but everybody else including seniors that more often than not have a fixed income, and don’t really have another opportunity to make up for the additional cost.

So, I think based on my communication about this bill as it came out of the House, for those that had voiced concerns, I’ve not heard anybody say to me they thought the mitigation by starting it some four months earlier necessarily accomplished the goal, and that to go to about four years didn’t necessarily accomplish the goal either given the wage rate increases in the last minimum wage discussion that we had and at the time minimum wages were increased. It’s still too far, too fast.

Madam President, we had people come to testify and in fact, they had testified as nonprofits that in the past legislation they testified in support. They could price it into whatever it was that they were doing, but they were concerned in this case that they would have no ability to price it in. In fact, if you look at the fiscal note that accompanies this bill, there are very specific circumstances where we as the payer for these services don’t even appropriate the money to pay this increased rate of pay, and so while the language of the bill is clear about what an employer will have to pay the employee, it still is very much a question as to whether or not the employer will have sufficient resources because they’re providing a service that we have a contract with them for to make those payments. The squeeze is just too much.
Madam President, we heard from Park and Recreation personnel who probably deal with as many, if not, more than any other camp scenario, and in most cases, they are an opportunity for parents to leave children during the summer months with qualified individuals and have in many cases a very limited income. They can only afford to pay what they can afford to pay, and yet, with these increases, the increased cost of day camp, they predict will be sufficient that they are going to have to stop offering certain opportunities.

So, this isn’t me calling somebody and asking them to come up to Hartford and testify. These are people that are paying attention to what we’re doing, and they’re saying, look we get it. We get the fact that people would like to make more money, and we get that there are individuals that believe as they do that they are entitled to more money, but there are certain circumstances where there isn’t enough of a cushion. Municipalities for instance don’t have enough of a cushion. They’re not a for-profit corporation. They’re not even a real not-for-profit corporation that has the luxury of paying in some cases salaries that municipalities can’t pay and won’t pay.

Madam President, the language seems to have done well by the restaurant industry, and I don’t run a restaurant, so I don’t know what the net effects of this bill will be on the restaurant industry, but I think at least my read of it is that there was an attempt to try and mitigate to some degree what happens with the restaurant industry, and I think that was another group of individuals that we heard from, and so I’m happy that there has been some change in that regard. I’m trying to remember all
the others that testified. Certainly, there were people that testified before the Labor Committee -- single moms, single dads, people that claim that they were working 60 hours a week, and this would provide them an opportunity to work a regular full-time job instead of a job and a half, and certainly, as we listen to them, it is believable, so it’s not a matter that we don’t -- or I don’t understand that additional money would be helpful. It would provide opportunity to people. The question is, is government doing it the right way to have it happen? I’ve said time and time again I don’t think we should be establishing an upside limit on anyone’s wage, that the market should determine someone’s upside wage, but what this is going to do is this is going to determine that the value of someone who has to change inventory in a hardware store is the same value as someone who may check me out of a fast food restaurant. Those are both jobs, they both require you to show up, they both require you to be pleasant. I’m not sure they should pay the same, but in many cases for at least young employees, those are starting jobs and everyone’s going to get paid the same rate and then everyone above that is going to get paid an increased rate when this changes. No one here should think that this is going to be limited to only the people that earn minimum wage. Small business across the state of Connecticut is going to be affected by this bill, and it may cause them to reduce hours. We heard that a lot. I think people are going to be far more careful about who they put on the schedule and when they put them on the schedule, and let’s not forget there’s probably another four or five bills that have to do with labor that are percolating their way
through the system that are going to put even more pressure on business.

So, Madam President, I will sit and listen to the other questions and comments this evening. I did not support the bill in committee. I did not support the bill in the Appropriations Committee. I still think it has the same problems that it had in both of those committees with regard to appropriations. We don’t appropriate enough money to pay these wages, and I think the effect on business is still the same as it was when I read the bill and heard the public hearing in the Labor Committee, so I will listen some more, but I doubt very much that I’m going to be able to support this this evening, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Miner. Will you remark further? Senator Kissel.

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH):

Thank you very much, Madam President. Great to see you there this evening. I have a couple of questions, but they may get answered later on, so I’m just going to make a statement, and I certainly don’t want to go on for a long period of time, but you’re all probably very tired of hearing that I grew up in the town of Windsor, first English settlement in the State of Connecticut. There will not be a quiz at the end of session, but my first job was at 14, and back in those days, Windsor and the surrounding towns were famous for their tobacco farms. In fact, in the concourse between the LOB and here, one of those big pictures on the wall is a picture of a tobacco field and tobacco shed, and it
says Windsor. I think it says like 1965, but it really wasn’t the same in the 70s when I did that. I would get up at 5 in the morning. My mother would have to wake me up or my dad to get ready to wait for a truck at 6, so that I could be in a muddy row more often than not at 7 in the morning ready to work, and then picking tobacco, the first thing you do is you sucker, which is to take the little things between the stem and the leaves, and then as the plant grows you begin with picking the leaves at a certain order. My first wage was $1.10 an hour. Now, granted at 14, I don’t need a living wage. I’m not supporting a family -- God willing. But I will always remember getting that first paycheck. It just felt incredibly great because this if the first time I didn’t have to go to my parents if I saw a toy or an album or baseball hat or whatever kids want. I got that check. The other thing I learned at 14 is I went to my dad and I said, what’s this other stuff? Why they taking money out? What’s this FICA thing? He just laughed and he goes, oh, you’re going to be doing that for the rest of your life. It’s good that you’re learning it now, and even at 14, the self-esteem that I felt from having a job was a good thing. It’s a hard job. Agriculture work is hard work. It’s dirty work. I mean we would be in those rows for a couple of hours, and then they’d bring the water barrel. The water barrel, they’d open the spicket, you could get some to drink, but they also created like this puddle with the mud because the tobacco tar made your hands so sticky you would need to like clean them in that mud if you were gonna like have a snack or something like that, and then do it again when it was lunchtime. Unfortunately, those jobs are gone because of the march of time, and I feel bad for
young people because unless you’re a paperboy or girl or paper person, there’s not the opportunity to experience that kind of difficult first job, and so I’ve been able to sort of peg every job in my life to that job, but as hard as it was getting up at 5, truck at 6, field at 7, and if it’s a hot day or if you just pretty much get done 3-ish -- 3:30 -- it feels really good. Work is good. Having money in your pocket is a good thing. Feeling that you accomplished something is a good thing. Sixteen or 17 maintenance worker, corporation, painting machines, things like that, moving stuff, cabinets, whatever they needed that day. It was interesting in that every day was different, but some days you had just really grunt work. Other days might be something less onerous, maybe painting something, but maintenance, summer job, slightly better wage, and then for six summers I was really lucky to work in a summer camp. I started off as a counselor, then unit director, and then program director, not paid hourly. It’s an overnight camp. I don’t know how this would fit in. Maybe later on if I don’t get an answer, I’ll ask that question, because it was basically you get “X” a week. I’m happy that it doesn’t apply to camps that are open less than six months. The one that I worked in was not open more than six months, but again, what it was is you’re gonna basically work from when you get out of that year of college until when you have to go back to college, so it ended up being pretty close to three months, and it was like you’re gonna get “X” amount of dollars per week, but also room and board because you’re living in a cabin with the kids or you get a special unit director’s cabin, and you get the three meals a day, and one day off at the camp that I worked in was like noon like on whatever day you
wanted to noon the next day, so I mean I don’t know how the hourly wage fits into that or if it’s exempt. I’m guessing if you had to put it all together like the employer would get credit for whatever the cost of the room and board is as well.

I guess what I’m saying is that one of the areas that we have to be very mindful of is racing forward with an increase in the minimum wage so much so fast that we eliminate opportunities for our young people, and I know that there’s some exceptions in this proposal that would address that based on age, but I’m not so sure it really does everything that it has to do, so that’s a concern that I have, and I think that more and more it just seems like there’s less opportunities for our youth, and if you can’t get your foot in the door and get that experience, it’s -- it’s not good for us as a society.

Now, in the wintertime, there’s a thing in Davos, Switzerland where thought leaders and billionaires and movers and shakers, and I believe at least one year former governor Malloy went, and they sort of like talk about what’s the future of the world, and I enjoy reading articles on what they are talking about, trying to figure it out, and I may disagree or might agree, but for the last few years, they’re talking about mechanizations. We’ve seen the story before with the industrial revolution where we transform from an agrarian society to an industrialized society, and it caused a lot of people -- just large batches of people lost the jobs that they were used to, the lifestyle that they were used to, and became part of the mechanization, and those are brutal jobs, and you have people called luddites that would go and sabotage the machines. Well, lately in Davos, they’re talking about the
next wave of mechanization with robotics and things like that and actually predicting that displacement of human workers from the jobs that they’re used to in the next decade or so, so that’s already -- that’s already going on, and I know I read somewhere that McDonald’s is going to be hiring a bunch of people, but you can’t go into McDonald’s now without seeing that sort of order-it-yourself kiosk, and I was sort of like the old school and they still have people that will take your orders, but my youngest son, Tristan, it’s completely natural to him, and it’s like, dad, you just go [mimicking noise], and it’s just like, dad, where’s your credit card? Okay, we got our food, and he’s completely used to that, and so we’re just beginning to see the transformation because I don’t think we’ll be surprised that in 10 years they’ll be a lot more of that mechanization in there and less of the human beings in there. There’s a restaurant chain, I believe, in California, where they even have mechanized the flipping of the burgers and things like that, and you know, the folks that work for the larger chains they have the wherewithal to hire business folks and economists, and maybe even actuaries, and you get to a point where you go the numbers work so that it’s more profitable for us or it’s a better business decision in the long run to mechanize certain aspects as opposed to sticking with human workers, and so to the extent, we raise up that minimum wage, which has a domino effect, because if you keep pushing up the bottom, other people up that chain have to be raised as well because it’s not fair just to raise the bottom up. You know, if you’ve got a good employ who’s been there ten years, well, you want to treat them fairly as well, right? So -- so that all happens. So,
that’s one negative consequence that we could be stumbling into inadvertantly. I certainly don’t doubt the motives of people that are really pushing this bill. They want to help people make more money, and that the minimum wage as it stands now they don’t feel is appropriate. I don’t feel the minimum wage necessarily was always supposed to be a living wage. I think it was an entry wage and this notion that you can sort of like live on a minimum wage with a four-person family or something -- we’re never gonna get there, but we don’t want to foreclose the opportunities for people to get into the workforce. I hope I’m wrong. I hope I am wrong that this particular bill, which I believe goes too far way too fast, will have that deleterious negative repercussion.

The other negative aspect I think that is even more likely than mechanization and robotics is that employers are just going to say, all right, I have “X” amount of employees, cost me “X”, and now I have to play X plus Y. I can either try to squeeze more work out of the employees that I have or I may just have to lay off somebody and everybody else is going to have to pick up the slack. I’ve bumped into people in my neck of the woods, Northcentral Connecticut, where I have been told that’s coming down the road if this bill passes. Someone in early childhood education -- there’s not a huge margin for those individuals working with three and four-year-olds. There’s so many folks in there for so many children, and if this pushes the cost up, there’s only so much you can add on to the cost of the service before families will not opt to have their children go to paid early childhood, so you don’t want to raise your rate so much that you diminish the amount of people that want to come to your
service; thereby, undermining your service and maybe putting yourself out of business. So, if you have seven folks working with “X” amount of children, now you may say I can only afford six or five, and then you regroup with the ones that are remaining and say you’re gonna have to do it this way now and cover more kids and stuff like that, and there’s a lot of businesses out there. I’m not saying they’re necessary hand-to-mouth. I’m saying there are really tight margins for staying in business, and I really fear for them.

I mean I know that folks are not going to have great sympathy for the subways of the world, but the folks that are working there and other kinds of chains like that, they’re not making oodles of tips. Some restaurants -- I talked to a restaurant owner a couple of weeks ago, his wait staff are making $35 or $40 bucks an hour. It’s a great restaurant, but he’s concerned about all the other folks, not the wait staff, and that’s taking a greater share of the contributions is not a great thing, but he’s worried about everybody in the kitchen and the bus people and the cooks and all of them because it just has ramifications all the way there. When we eventually tack onto the automatic uptick, I don’t know why we use like this high-end tri-city New York, metropolitan index. Look into like just the consumer price index -- not even close. If you were going to use an index, use that. What’s happening in metro New York, tri-state area is no reflection in my neck of the woods, Northcentral Connecticut. It’s just two different worlds. It’s really not a one-size-fits-all state. Just the cost -- just the cost of living in Fairfield County is so disproportionate to, you know, north of Hartford.
And, so I’m not here to fillabuster. I’m not here to rant and rave, but I have distinct concerns that the goodwill behind this bill while well intended there just is the possibility of some very negative ramifications, unintended consequences. The jumps are far greater in this bill than we have seen in past minimum wage bills, and the timeframe not even 12 months. It’s like 11 months, 11 months, 11 months, 11 months. You can’t even -- I mean my understanding businesses have at least one-year plans, if not two and five-year plans, and here it is like ratcheting up not in the in face of a year, but 11 months, 11 months, 11 months, and these are giant jumps. So, I hope I’m wrong. If this bill passes and I’m under no illusions that it will not get out of this Chamber and be signed into law by Governor Lamont, but I’m hoping that we’re not here next February -- God willing we’re all healthy and back here -- and people are already screaming saying, Oh, my God, because now this doesn’t even take effect January 1, 2020, this is going to take effect in October. We’re going to start knowing how this is going to work out real fast, and I don’t want to hear from my constituents in Northcentral Connecticut that, oh, we’re losing our jobs because better to have a wage that’s going up less dramatically over a longer period of time and have a job than this dramatic fast-paced increase and lose a job, and I’m not down on Connecticut, but to say that you know if we have two quarters where we have negative growth -- well, that’s probably not gonna happen, but we are truly anemic when it comes to growth, and if we’re just trotting along at like 0.5 percent and surrounding states are moving much quicker than us, not to mention the rest of the country, that’s not a success story, but that
wouldn’t be enough to trip the mechanism to slow this whole thing down.

So, I think there are flaws in this. I really wish it would have been negotiated so that it would be less dramatic increases over a longer period of time, but I actually even if that were the case I don’t think our state at this point in time can afford this. Right now, these businesses are talking to me saying, we’re barely making it. Please do whatever you can to try to stop this, but we could talk to 3 in the morning, 6 tomorrow morning, and when it’s all over, the votes will be cast, and it’s gonna get through. But I really would hope that the proponents of the bill, if you see that this was a mistake when we come into session next February, please don’t hesitate to modify it and correct those errors. If I’m wrong, I’m wrong, but I’ve been around here long enough to say that sometimes bills with the best of intentions have unintended negative consequences, and sometimes we spend as much time fixing a bill that we just passed in the next session as we did in trying to run up to get the bill passed in the first place.

And, so please consider these things as we continue this discussion and conversation and debate here in the circle, but again, having a job is much better than not having a job.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Kissel. Will you remark?
Senator Winfield.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH):
Good evening, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Good evening.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH):

So, I’m supportive of increasing the minimum wage and this bill. The last time that we actually increased the minimum wage in the state, I was the Chair of the Labor Committee, and right around that time, I remember standing with people talking about a $15-dollar wage. That was 2014, so I recognize that there are people who are concerned with the speed with which we are moving to minimum wage of $15 dollars in several years from now, but when we’re done with this, we will be nearly a decade after I was having that conversation as the Chair of the Labor Committee. I wanted to be eloquent, but I’m tired both physically and mentally, so I’m just gonna tell a story because when we have the minimum wage debate, they’re often stories told in this Chamber about people’s first jobs. None of us are extremely young, so usually, those are stories from a time a little bit ago, including myself at this point, but I want to talk about the concept of a living wage as it relates to the minimum wage. So, my mother had a really good job that paid her a living wage, but she found herself in a situation where that living wage was -- didn’t work out the way that it should given all the other things that had happened to her, and we were surrounding by a lot of people who were struggling to make it, and because of the situation she found herself in when my father had left us and had debts and whole bunch of other stuff, we struggled. So, I know what it is to try to make it, and I want to tell you what it
can mean in a person’s life, so we have a lot of conversations around this circle about the impact that the bills we put forward have on people’s lives. We have a lot of conversations about a variety of topics, one of which is education that has been a passion of mine since I got here, and in my life, the fact that my mother had the struggle which she had, which of course then is my struggle, it meant that when I went to school I didn’t go to school in the community I lived in because that community given how much money we made, where we were able to live, was not a community that I would ever stand here today if I went to the school in that community, and so we pretended to go somewhere else -- we pretended to live somewhere else so that we could go to school there, and when I came home -- because of the way that the community worked -- I would find myself on the ground floor going to do my homework, and this talks about the opportunities that people have. And, when I’m on the ground floor going to do my homework in my apartment, I have to make it there of course, and so the only two ways to get there are through the elevator and the stairs, and this has to do with how much money people make and the conditions they live in. The elevator is, as you know, it’s an elevator. It’s a regular elevator, except this elevator almost always is without light, and this elevator usually has urine in it, and much of the time it has somebody riding on top of the elevator because they’re looking for somebody that they can make a little money from, not in a way you and I make money at our jobs, and experience is a very similar condition. And, so, yes, because my mother doesn’t have enough money to live well, and I’m not talking luxuriously, I’m just talking live well. Because she doesn’t have that
money, the experience I have as a five, six, seven-year-old kid is the experience of having these things that I have to do in order to open the door to my home to do my homework.

When we talk about the minimum wage, and we should be talking about a living wage at the very least, when we talk about it, these are the things that we don’t talk about in the circle -- the experiences people have. That expediency with which some of us think we should be moving is because of that, and I hear people often times say, well, the minimum wage should be considered to be a living wage because it was never meant to be that. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, FDR, actually said something different than that. I’m going to quote him. He says, “No business which depends for existence on paying less than living wages” as he’s talking about the minimum wage “to it’s workers has any right to continue in this country.” And, then they went and passed the law that created a minimum wage. It’s clear in historical record that the intent would be that people would be able to live well. We’re here talking about a sub-living wage. That’s what this fight is for. This fight accurately is for a sub-living wage because in the State of Connecticut right now the living wage is larger than when we get to the minimum wage of $15 dollars. What we are fighting for is for people to be able to exist in conditions [Crying] like the conditions that I had to grow up in and hoping that we can get there.

What we are saying to people is we had experiences where we learned the value of work, we learned and had pride in that work that we did. That’s good. That’s nice. Let me tell you the experiences of the young people I talk to right now. They get that
first check and they want to have all the pride and the value that we had. They look at that check that they sit down and they don’t have a little cash in their pocket because the point of getting a check for them wasn’t to do what we did. The point of getting a check for them was to help with the house, and when they look at that check and they see what’s in that check, they haven’t done much to help in that house, and that sense they have is not a sense of pride, it’s a continued and further sense of desperation. But we are fighting to make sure that it stays that way, that they understand that they are going to continue to be locked into a system that does not allow them to help out in that house in a way they had hoped they could, and I said I was tired, but I’m not as tired as that mother who has to work all those jobs. We keep acting like it’s teenagers that we’re talking about. That’s not what we’re talking about. And, if we’re gonna have a conversation, then we might as well just say what it is. We are talking about people who are trying to live, and what we are saying is it’s okay for you to have a substandard wage, a less than living wage. We are saying that the wage we talked about five years ago is not good enough today and maybe to some of us not good enough in years from now -- four to four and a half years from now. It’s unacceptable. It’s absolutely unacceptable. You know, the situation that I described to you is about five minutes of my day as a child. I won’t bother to explain to you what the rest of the day was like, but when I’ve explained my day thoroughly to people who are adults right now, many of them tell me they couldn’t make it through that day, and as a legislature, we are saying to people it’s difficult. There are all these things you have to consider.
Mechanization has been coming since we had work. Mechanization is coming whether or not we have a minimum wage increase or not. It’s a part of what happens. This technology advance has never not been the case. It’s also not a reason not to increase the minimum wage.

You know, I’ve talked about my mother quite a bit here. My mother passed partially because of the way she lived. You know, we talk about what -- what we should be doing and how we should do it, and my mother was one of those people who recognized that as a parent she had a responsibility, and I’m not just talking about the responsibility to raise me up and send me out into the world but a responsibility to be present while she was working that job. I was thinking about it as I was thinking about this. My mother never took a single vacation in the whole time that I knew her so that she could make it work for us. So, when my mother died, she died because she literally worked herself to death.

And, I don’t know about the rest of you, but I could not possibly stand here and look at the people of this state and say that’s okay for any of them. It’s not okay for not one single person, but people are going to do that because they’re going to do what’s necessary for them and their children, and what I hope we do as a body is what is necessary for them and their children and that is to increase the minimum wage.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Winfield. Will you remark?
Senator Sampson.
SENATOR SAMPSON (16TH):

Thank you, Madam President. The other day we were having a conversation in here on another subject, and I mentioned what our core responsibilities are as state legislators, and they include upholding our constitutions both state and federal, representing our constituents, and above all making good public policy. This vote for me will be a very easy one since I know that this is not good public policy, and that the overwhelming response that I have received from my constituents has been in opposition. The House of Representatives spent 14 hours debating this issue, so I imagine there is not a whole lot that has been left unsaid, but one thing I noticed when listening is I was astounded to hear that even among the proponents of what could be only be described as a radical increase in the minimum wage, there seemed to be a task at understanding that it will indeed hurt some people. That actually gives me hope that they can see and understand the basic functions of economics at work. The current state of our state’s economy is an unfortunate but perfect example, especially when you compare it with other states. The states that are around us are recovering and rebounding at a much, much faster rate than we are in Connecticut, and thank heavens. In fact, I believe it is the national economy that is keeping Connecticut afloat at this time. It’s no secret that Connecticut has a reputation as an anti-business state and that we are struggling. People are leaving our state. Businesses are leaving our state, and people that I talk to in my district feel like they are being forced out, and they’re not rich people or poor people or middle-class people. They’re people of all walks of life.
Of course, now this year the threat of more damage to our economy is before us. We talk about tolls, a budget that will certainly contain maybe a billion dollars more in taxes on our constituents, a forced payroll deduction in the form of family medical leave, and the bill before us -- a huge steep increase in the minimum wage that’s not found in science or research. Simply, a campaign slogan masquerading as public policy. The whole idea of a minimum wage is a debatable issue by itself, but even among people that see value in having a minimum wage, if they are being honest, I think at this time Connecticut in 2019 with a shrinking population that’s looking to escape as a lack of jobs and opportunities, as a good place to make such a change, a radical change, 50 percent increase in the minimum wage in less than five years, and I have not heard from the proponents of this legislation exactly how this is supposed to play out. Surely, they know that not everyone who is working for $10.10 an hour currently is going to end up better off as a result of this.

I want to make a point about economics. A couple of rhetorical questions for instance. First, is there anyone in this room or anyone listening that would pay $30,000 dollars for a $20,000-dollar car? You wouldn’t. Would you pay $150 dollars for $100-dollars-worth of groceries? No, you wouldn’t. Would you pay $150,000 dollars for a home that’s only worth $100,000? You wouldn’t. So, why does anyone think that an employer will pay someone $15-dollars an hour for a job that is only worth $10-dollars per hour. I just want to make a point that I mentioned job. I didn’t say a person worth $10-dollars-an-hour. I don’t put people in categories like that, but businesses when they are figuring out
their finances determine how much a job is worth to them. That’s how business works. Business owners are constantly making calculations to determine the best way to run their company. That is their job, and when they hire someone, they are calculating the value of the work that they need their workers to accomplish versus the production that they are going to produce and all of their other expenses, and they create the jobs that are out there in our world based on that criteria. When we get together as a government and increase the minimum wage, it’s really important that we understand what the result of that is, and it is not that people who make less than the minimum wage are automatically going to get a pay raise. Experience tells us that that’s not what happens, and it will not happen in this case. So, what will? Every job that exists right now that pays below what the minimum wage will be if this law is enacted will be immediately eliminated at least in the legal marketplace, which is a whole other topic of conversation that maybe I’ll touch on again since the discussion of an underground economy as a result of a high minimum wage is a real subject we’re talking about.

And, I’m not saying that everyone who works for $10.10 right now is going to lose their job. That’s not what I said. I said that every job that is worth $10.10 an hour, that it currently pays $10.10 an hour will be eliminated, and essentially, that’s because of the law we’re passing that makes it illegal to have a job for $10.10 an hour. So, not everyone that works for $10.10 will lose their job, but they will lose the job they had because that job is gone. It doesn’t exist anymore. So, what will happen? Businesses will be forced to adapt, and this will mean that since they can no longer create
jobs for less than the minimum wage and therefore, no more $10.10 jobs, they will have to restructure their business in a way to make new jobs that pay at least the minimum wage. And, the end result is that while some people might benefit by getting one of those new jobs, and their job might change from being a $10.10 an hour job to a $15-dollar-an-hour job, many more people will simply lose the job that they had. And, this is my issue with this bill is that increasing the minimum wage essentially eliminates choice and freedom, and that’s for both employers and employees because a job is a voluntary relationship between citizens that is our duty to represent. There will -- whether this passes or not -- be people who are willing to work for less than whatever the minimum wage is, and there will be employers willing to employ them, and we are essentially making that relationship that would be voluntary and by willing adults illegal, and the result of that will be a negative impact on our economy, and the loss of those low-paying jobs will result in more people fleeing our state. It will also result in more people out of work who are going to look to the state for more benefits, furthering the vicious cycle we are in now where we have an expanding population of people that are receiving benefits through Social Services rather than working. It also creates an incentive as I mentioned a moment ago for people to create under-the-table jobs. Those that are seeking a great book to read to understand basic economics and how the minimum wage really interacts in a state or government economy, ought to read The Wealth of Nations by Adam Smith. It was written in 1776, a great year, and I just took one quote out of his book, and I hope you will bear with me while I read
it. It says, “When an independent workman such as a weaver or shoemaker has got more stock than what is sufficient to purchase the materials of his own work and to maintain himself he can dispose of it, he naturally employs one or more journeyman with a surplus in order to make a profit by the work, increase the surplus, and he will naturally increase the number of his journeyman.” And, I know we are talking about weavers and journeymen, but I think it’s clear. He goes on to say that “An increase in production leads to an increase in profits, which then allows for an increase in the demand for workers. This is the natural way jobs are created and demand for higher wages can come about. The demand for those who live by wages; therefore, necessarily increases with the increase of the revenue and stock of every country, and cannot possibly increase without it. The increase of revenue and stock is the increase of the national wealth. The demand for those who live by wages; therefore, naturally increases with the increase of the national wealth, and cannot possibly increase without it.” It’s clear that imposing an artificial limitation will only stifle a percentage of the overall production of wealth; and therefore, stifle economic growth.

Of course, Adam Smith was talking about nations, but that applies to every business itself and also to the State of Connecticut. When you have less production, you will therefore have less wealth and less opportunities.

I want to take a second just to correct a bunch of fallacies that I’ve heard while discussing some of our state’s economic policies and this subject of the minimum wage. Like the concept of wealth --
what is wealth? Some wealth exists in a natural form like resources -- oil in the ground, precious metals, and so forth, but most wealth is created and that means created by work. Turning trees into houses for instance, and that requires work and production. Some people would have us believe that there is a finite amount of wealth in the world, and they want us to believe that if some person has a significant amount of wealth that that means that they are taking it from someone else, and that’s just simply not true. We are so fortunate to live in the greatest country on this earth, and compared to the first 100 years of the United States of America, there is absolutely no comparison in our entire human history of a period to have a greater period of prosperity and economic growth.

If you think about the European countries that immediately proceeded our revolution -- England, France, Sprain, so forth, they were agricultural societies more or less, and they did trades but not on a great extent. America, on the other hand, when we began is a place that had free market capitalism and unfettered opportunity for the brave and courageous people that settled here, and that’s why we thrived. We thrived based on that freedom and innovation. Some of the greatest inventions in the history of mankind were created during that first 100 years of America -- the discovery of electricity, the electric lightbulb, the telephone, the radio, the TV, indoor plumbing, the automobile, the tire that goes on the automobile. You could go on all day about things we have -- indoor plumbing. These things all came into reality during that period of time. It led to the amazing quality of life that we all enjoy in 2019, and we benefit from the existence of these things that we have because
of those great pioneers that took the freedom that they had to make great wealth, and yes, I mean great wealth. There are some folks that became unbelievably wealthy that we couldn’t even categorize today. You think of Rockefeller or Carnegie or Howard Hughes. Yes. There was significant income inequality, which is a term I hear all the time, but their extreme income inequality also employed thousands and thousands of people, and we should realize that when you’re discussing economic terms and you’re saying things like inequality, it does not happen in a vacuum. Everything is connected to everything else, and when I hear that income inequality is a bad thing, I say to myself but that is the thing that drives economies. If people were all in the same exact financial situation, why would anyone go through the trouble to try and improve their situation? Why would they go out and create the next best thing? Why would they work so hard to achieve another goal?

What’s bad is not income inequality, what’s bad is poverty, and those are two entirely different things. And, you know what fixes poverty? Not an artificial minimum wage. That will not work because business owners are not going to pay people more than the job is worth. It’s not social programs that are created by taxing one group of people to give the money to another. You know what fixes poverty? Economic opportunity. A thriving economy. Freedom is what fixes poverty, not the artificial rules that stifle economic growth, and that’s really the basis for the difference in our political parties I think more than anything. I really appreciated the comments that I heard from Senator Winfield, and I am certainly sympathetic to his experiences growing up, but I would submit that a
higher minimum wage would not have changed that situation. The best thing that could have happened would have been freedom and opportunity, reaching all levels in all places in our society, and that is what I come here for -- to make public policy that creates freedom and opportunity for everything, that is colorblind, that creates opportunities for education and jobs no matter who you are or where you come from, and that’s my main issue with this $15-dollar minimum wage bill. It prevents free people from exercising their freedom to associate and make a voluntary business arrangement with someone else. Aside from being nothing more than a campaign slogan or a bumper sticker. There is a difference between what is good campaign rhetoric and what is workable public policy.

You know, Senator Winfield also talked about FDR and the origins of the minimum wage policy, but I would also encourage people to look up something called the Davis Bacon Act of 1931, and this is where we get our prevailing wage laws that exist today, but it’s also the basis for how the minimum wage work, but if you read about the Davis Bacon Act, which you understand is why it was created was not to advance a certain group of people by giving them an artificially high wage for the job they’re doing, it was designed to prevent other people from getting jobs because they were willing to work for less. It was designed to protect a certain group of people from others who would come and take their jobs and opportunities because they were willing to work for less. Minimum wage laws adversely affect the underprivileged parts of our society. You heard me say that. research it. understand the Davis Bacon Act, and you will see that very clearly. That’s the exact opposite of what I’m hearing why we’re doing
this. How is it exactly helping our state and improving the quality of life of our residents? It’s not, and the people in my community can see that. I have received countless emails and calls expressing a great distress over the fallout of this policy if it’s enacted. I have a stack of them here. I’m just going to read a couple of the highlights.

Thomas Shaw who owns Tri Valley Equipment and Prospect in my district, “If we have to bring in entry-level young employees at $15 dollars per hour, that will leave less room to grant raises to my skilled labor. Freezing their wages will drive them out of the state and make it harder for me to compete with out-of-state employers.” That’s a real thing happening to a real business in this state in my district. The reduction in labor costs would be achieved through reduced jobs, reduced hours, or reduced benefits, impacting the very people these proposals are trying to help.

Brendan Caine -- he owns three Burger Kind franchises including one on Queen Street -- “I would be left with no other options than cutting labor hours in half by laying off and not hiring.”

Bill from Cromwell. I don’t know how he got into my email. That’s not my district but nonetheless, stop trying to fix this state on the backs of the small businessmen by creating more tax revenue through us. Don’t forget that along with the wage increase that I’ll have to pay, my Work Comp will go up, my taxes will go up, my costs will go up from my gas, my 12 cars at my local store to the guy that plows my driveway at my office. Who is paying for all of this? My customers” he says, “and what are they
going to do when I re-raise my rates? Some will leave, some are going to stop calling me. Please think about that” he says, “before voting on this bill.”

There are a lot of these. I’m not going to read them all, but they’re from people that work in nursing homes, people that own all kinds of small businesses. Steve Briotti, he’s a realtor in town – - “My business relies on a lower minimum wage; otherwise, I’d have to cut my staff hours.” I don’t want to read all of these. “They will kill local businesses and hurt our economy” says Vivian from Prospect. I highlighted a couple. I just want to get there. Here’s somebody who works at YMCA Camp Sloper in Southington -- “Our camp serves 3200 kids each summer, and we employ 190 staff to serve these campers. If we were to increase the minimum wage for all our staff to $15 dollars by 2022, that would equate to an increase in staff wages of $260 some odd thousand dollars. If we pass this cost onto our families, many of them will not be able to pay for their kids to go to camp any longer.”

And, there’s one other thing I want to mention that came out in today’s news actually in my district. There’s a headline that says Waterbury company will be forced out of Connecticut with $15 dollar minimum wage, and I have actually been emailing back and forth with -- I don’t know if he’s one of the owners, but his name is Mark Polinski, and the business is called Forum Plastics, LLC out of Waterbury. Forum employs 145 people, many of whom are paid minimum wage to manufacture plastics for medical device companies. He sent me an email he got from Dayton, Texas -- “As Interim Executive Director of the Dayton Community Development
Corporation, I would like to request a conference call to discuss the advantages of moving to Dayton, Texas.” Here’s a business -- this guy announced today he’s going to move his business -- 145 employs in Waterbury, somewhere else. That’s a real thing. That’s not just some rhetoric. That’s not just me up here saying, oh, it’s gonna hurt businesses. This is a guy who runs a business. I know that my colleagues will do a really great job speaking on the direct results and impacts of this policy, and I’m sure they’re going to talk about the effect on entry-level workers, the impact on summer camps, amusement parks, how it’s going to affect the cost of everything that we purchase and how it’s going to impact people on fixed incomes. I am hopeful that their compelling testimony is enough to cause those in this room voting in favor of this bill to reconsider. The bill has already passed the House, and I presume that the governor will sign it, so that means that it’s only us, the people in this room that have the power to stop this dangerous policy that will impact our state for years to come and stop it from hurting our constituents. This is not the answer. Connecticut is at a tipping point. It’s about whether people are going to decide to stay or leave. It’s about whether businesses are deciding to stay or leave. We all see it happening. I have argued day in and day out that we need a new and different path than the one that we are on. Every policy that we discuss in this room should be measured against whether or not it makes our state a more attractive place to live, to work, to start or relocate a business, or to retire. If the answer is no, then you vote no. On the bill before us, Madam President, the answer is no. And, I’ll make just one final comment and remind everyone here that the
best way to give everyone in our state a raise is to reduce the size of government spending and to cut taxes. That would be a plan I could get behind.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Sampson. Will you remark further? Senator Flexer.

SENATOR FLEXER (29TH):

Good evening, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Good evening, Senator Flexer.

SENATOR FLEXER (29TH):

Madam President, I rise in support of the bill before us. Madam President, I’ve been thinking a great deal about this debate, having watched a good amount of the debate with our colleagues in the House last week. I spent a lot of time talking with my family about this over the weekend, which I’m going to share with the Chamber. I wanted -- just before I forget -- to thank the leadership of Senator Looney who has been a leader on these sorts of issues and fighting for working people in our state for a long time. I want to thank Representative Porter for her tremendous leadership in the House in getting us to this point, and Senator Kushner for her great leadership and her lifelong history of fighting for working people, and I’m so grateful that she’s here and our colleagues today.
I want to associate myself with the remarks a few moments ago of Senator Winfield and his incredibly impelling story that he told about his mother and his family’s experience, and what this really means to -- to working people. But before I do that, I do just need to say that in this debate this evening we heard about an unprecedented period of time in our country -- I believe it was the description of 100 years of economic growth that had never been seen before in any part of the world, the first 100 years of this country. I think it needs to be pointed out for the record that during the first 100 years of this country, we had 84 years of slavery -- 84 years of this horrible maltreatment of people who were forced to do the work that allowed that economic growth in this country to happen, and so we cannot have a conversation about the first 100 years of this country as if it was some wonderful period of time without marking the black mark that is in our nation’s history, and also think about the impact that that still has on us today and how so many families are still dealing with discrimination and the long-term impacts of the racial history of this country that requires them to be in situations where they need to work minimum wage jobs, and I think it would be really remiss if we did not reflect on that in this conversation this evening.

Madam President, this bill before us is a matter of equity and fairness. This is a bill that will lift up people in our state. It’s a bill that’s been debated for quite sometime in this Chamber and in the House, and we’ve heard the stories of real workers who have come forward and talked about how they are constantly trying to just cobbled things together to make ends meet, to keep a roof over their head, to keep food on their kids’ table, to
keep the heat on and the lights on, and they’re working multiple jobs, and many of the wages that they earn in these jobs just aren’t enough. It is not a living wage -- the minimum wage, and it should be, and it is designed to be. People who work full time ought to be able to meet their basic needs and their family’s basic needs. I know this because when I was a little girl my parents worked minimum wage jobs. My mother -- we talked about this a great deal this weekend on Mother’s Day. My mom said, “What should we talk about?” I said, “Let’s talk about the minimum wage, mom.” And, so we did. When -- when I was a kid my parents struggled a great deal, as I’ve shared in my service here in the General Assembly from time-to-time. My mother, when I was 6, worked at a company called Idle Wild Farms, which was in Pomfret, Connecticut, where they manufactured frozen meals, and she worked the third shift. While my sister and my father and I were sleeping, my mother would go there and pick apart frozen chicken and make meals so that she and my father could save up to afford our first apartment here in Connecticut. During that period of time when my mother was working that minimum wage job and saving that money, we lived in a camper. And, because of that money and the long nights that my mother worked, we were able to finally afford an apartment, and later, my dad also worked a minimum wage job, and they struggled. They struggled a great deal. We were able to get various forms of assistance including what was then called food stamps and other things that helped my parents make ends meet, but it’s hard. It’s hard to make ends meet, and I share this with you not because I really knew it was hard. My sister and I we were kind of oblivious to that. We had a nice little life in
Danielson, Connecticut, and my parents did a really good job of making sure that the reality that they dealt with every day and trying to figure out a way to stretch those dollars didn’t impact my sister and I, but you know, the last time my sister and I worked for minimum wage, we were in college. We didn’t have to do that because of the hard work that my parents did for so many years, and -- and to Senator Winfield’s point earlier, never had a vacation, never really went anywhere. My parents sacrificed a lot, but people need to understand that there are so many people in our state who are currently having experiences just like the ones that I described from my mom and dad and our little family. There are so many people who this raise that we’re considering here this evening is going to make all the difference in the world, but frankly, it’s also not enough. It’s not enough -- $31,200 dollars a year is going to be the total annual income for someone who works full time -- when this full $15-dollar minimum wage goes into effect in almost 4-1/2 years. that’s a long time from now. Thirty-one thousand two hundred dollars is just about what we make here as state legislatures give or take for some of us. That’s pretty much our base salary, and I’m pretty confident that there aren’t too many of us who live just on that salary. I’d like everyone in this circle to think long and hard on whether or not you could live on just that paycheck and what that reality is really like ‘cause that’s what we’re talking about here today. That’s what we’re talking about, and sometimes -- and Representative Porter said this incredibly eloquently in the House debate -- "Sometimes I get concerned that there just aren’t enough people who have the privilege to serve here in the Senate and
the House who truly understand what that reality is like, who really understand what it’s like to have $5 dollars left, who really understand what it’s like to have to choose between paying the electric bill or the heat bill”, and I ask everyone in this circle to reflect upon that because those are the people that we’re fighting here this evening. We’re trying to make their lives a little bit better, trying to make sure that a hard day’s work is actually respected, and that they get a wage that’s in accordance with that.

So, Madam President, I -- I hope that -- that my colleagues will support this measure this evening, and I truly want to thank very deeply the great colleagues here in the circle who have worked so hard on this legislation, and I want to thank the workers who so powerfully told their stories and advocated for this, and I’m hopeful that we’re going to reward their advocacy with a strong vote here this evening.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Flexer. Will you remark further? Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH):

Thank you, Madam President, and good evening.

THE CHAIR:

Good evening.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH):
We’ve had a lot of time and may I say years contemplating this issue. It has always been on the forefront of the conversation, and in fact, I believe a number of years ago, we did address the issue of raising the minimum wage, and we did it in a way that we have seen to this day -- in my opinion -- still has affected our job growth in the state of Connecticut, and in my opinion, this bill continues to be a job killer, and it may very much affect the same people that it’s looking to empower. And, for me, this is also a debate that will get caught up in the technical data and the legalese, but what I want to be able to share with this circle are real people and real businesses in which lives are impacted, and I’ll share with you businesses in my district, and I’ll share with you stories.

We have a small pizza shop that just started three years ago called Pronto Pizza in my town. I’ve talked to the owners quite often. They struggle to keep their business alive. They built a nice niche business. They’ve hired and trained young people, retrained people, people that are undocumented in training. Bottom line, they have provided a business, and in fact, let me take that moment back. They do not -- absolutely, they do not hire undocumented individuals. They verify. They’re a great business. I don’t want to get them in trouble. [Laughing]. Just let me clarify that. But the bottom line they say quite clearly is this -- you raise the minimum wage, they will hire less people. They will train less people. They will not give high school and college students an opportunity. They will not expand their business. In fact, they said if you raise this we may indeed sell or just simply close up. Again, this is a potential job and business killer to one business
that I know. A second business I know is a great little deli, family owned, great partners in the community, quite clearly they say, “We won’t expand. Our cost will increase. Our product will increase. We’re not looking to expand anymore. We’re just looking to survive. You raise the minimum wage, you will affect our ability to build our business in Connecticut, and we make take early retirement. We may move on.” The bottom line you have disincentivized them to continue to want to grow in the State of Connecticut. We also have a mid-sized business, Bigelow Tea Company, beloved tea company in our town that have over 70 years of relationship with the community. Just got a letter from the CEO, Cindi Bigelow, who is part of the Commission on Fiscal Stability and Economic Growth, invited by Governor Lamont to participate in providing solution -- Governor Malloy. I apologize -- to find solutions on how we can move the state forward. She just wrote a letter to Governor Lamont saying raising this minimum wage will dramatically impact their ability to do business in this state. In fact, in her letter, she cited the fact that their current cost to produce a teabag in Connecticut is nearly 30 percent more expensive than their facility in Kentucky and Idaho, but they do it because they love this state, they love their community, and they are loyal to this state. But we continue to put pressure on them. We continue to put pressure on their ability to do business in the state, and raising minimum wage will be another example to increase their cost to delivering quality product and competing at a disadvantage versus other states.

We talked a lot about businesses and the job killing prospects of it, and the examples that I just shared with you, but we also impact our municipalities. We
have, in fact, by doing this created an unfunded mandate to our towns. One such example is in the town of Fairfield the Parks and Recreation has a very robust summer program for students to be able to participate in activities, trips, and crafts, and it hires college students to be able to provide those kind of services to be able to be team advisers, team leaders. In fact, my son was one of those employees, but one estimate came from our town Parks and Rec leader in Fairfield, literally said that raising of the minimum wage will cost nearly $400,000 dollars more. It will increase cost to the program, limit options, and ultimately be a property tax increase in our communities, an unfunded mandate on our municipalities in which we give them no option.

We also talked quite a bit in regards to nonprofits and our hospitals. Our nonprofits are great partners in this community, but as we saw just in the past years when we raised their salaries of employees to a special lack to $14.75, we created an unexpected wage compression that created tremendous havoc and tremendous cost burden to those nonprofits, one that they are very much right now dealing with. Who is to compensate them when we look at a state budget that continues to underfund and under appreciate their value in the service they deliver to our social safety net.

Ultimately, it’s a job killer because it will increase cost in goods in our community. We talked about businesses. We talked about cost. And, I’m going to follow and compliment the eloquence of Senator Winfield when he talked about the experience. Let me take a moment to share, as I briefly have done so in the past, of my family
experience. My parents escaped communist China, immigrated to this country, both parents not having the opportunity to even finish a high school education. We spent the first formative years in a housing project. My parents did not understand the language. They worked an hourly wage. My mom worked and was indeed actually a member of the Service Employees in a national union in a facility of staff working hourly. My dad worked and built a restaurant. My mom, after working a full day, would go to the restaurant and help out as a family business, and myself and my siblings after school and our activities and our work would go to the restaurant and help out. There was no minimum wage working in a family restaurant. But you know what I learned from that experience? I learned a commitment to quality work ethics. I learned the commitment to making sacrifices. I made a commitment to the American dream that is isn’t about getting a salary, but creating a future and the foundation of that was not to get more money or to raise my salary, because a negotiations wasn’t ever going to work with my parents. With that being said, the only thing they emphasized was an education, to pursue an education. And, I think that’s where the debate that we have right now about raising the minimum wage, about being able to create a living wage is misplaced. Creating a minimum wage is an artificial comfort. Fifteen dollars in Connecticut is not a livable wage, but if you don’t have the opportunities to pursue skills, education, and a work ethic to succeed, you will never get out of that cycle of poverty. We in the General Assembly have worked very hard this year to create apprenticeship programs to allow individuals to acquire skills that are valued, skills that are
well-compensated, skills that will always be in need despite whatever high-level sophisticated automation and mechanization that may occur.

I was always drilled into my head that when you have an education, when you pursue skills and knowledge that can be applied to creating a better living, you will never ever be poor. What we’re doing with this minimum wage, we can increase, but when mechanization comes in, when automation comes in -- as I said in the second part of my statement -- raising this minimum wage will disincentivize job hiring. It will disincentivize business growth in our state, and will dramatically impact the very people we’re trying to affect because instead of having a job at $15 dollars an hour, they will have no job because they will be replaced by a machine, by automation, by a self-check out line, and we misplace our priorities. We should focus on empowering people to pursue education, pursue skill sets. I was very disappointed last year when we pushed out a bill that gave tax credits to businesses that were going to give apprenticeship opportunities. We should revisit that bill. We should instead of increasing cost burdens to our businesses ask them if they would provide educational credits, educational funding for their employees to pursue the acquisition of more education and more skills.

Instead, we as a government create this artificial rise in dollars that is not in the market forces because you want to make everybody whole. Life is not easy, but in the work ethic that I was taught despite the humbling background that I have, despite the incredible journey that my parents took, despite the epidemic difficulties of language where English
is my second language I was imbedded and driven with a reminder that in this country you are allowed to do anything you would like in pursuing your dream, and it all began with getting an education, not $15 dollars an hour minimum wage. The trouble is we are not giving the proper motivation and the proper reality to the marketplace. Let’s empower everyone. One such example, the tremendous successes we’ve had in this state is the advanced manufacturing, associate’s degree that we populated within our community colleges. I can cite one example in Housatonic Community College. Upon that implementation, we’ve had graduates coming out of that program with a hundred percent employment at a starting salary no less than $20 dollars an hour and in dramatic and high demand, we are expanding that program. The difference -- they have a skill. They have an education. They have opportunities. Raising it to $15 dollars an hour is a great idea, but it’ unsustainable. It’s not truly a reflection of an individual’s ability to continue to build their future.

So, I rise in opposition to the underlying bill. I appreciate the advocates and their passion in raising this issue. I applaud them for their passion, but for me, the difference is I have grown up along that path of the stories that they describe, but to me, the difference wasn’t getting $15 dollars an hour. It was an opportunity to pursue and experience a job -- a job well done and an opportunity to pursue skills and education that would allow me to be in control of my own destiny.

Through you, one quick question to the proponent of the bill, ma’am?
THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Hwang. Senator Kushner, prepare yourself.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH):

Thank you, Madam President. One quick question. I mean one part of this bill, through you Madam President, is the ECI indexing and we recognize that should the index increase over a period of time we would increase the minimum wage. My question, through you Madam President, is should the index drop and we suffer economic challenges unforeseen and unhoped for in our state, would we ever lower the minimum wage set?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Hwang. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

Thank you. I’m just going to that section of the bill, and I’m pretty -- I’m pretty sure I know the answer to this question. I just want to make sure I get it right. So, my reading of the bill is that the minimum wage can be adjusted by the ECI and that report will become -- will come out, but it would not lower the minimum wage. It would increase the minimum wage.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Kushner. Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH):
Thank you, Madam President. So, it is as I understand it. It can only go up and as I said, should we encounter the job loss and business losses and the challenges that the state already encounters and the index reflects of decline, we don’t have a recourse to adjust to the market realities, and we can only go up. That’s a challenge I have, and in fact, I can only hope that during this debate and during this question, we can change people’s minds and votes in this circle, but unfortunately, I’m quite afraid that this no vote will be negated by passage of this bill, and I’m quite afraid that if we have a compounding negative effect to our fragile state as I mentioned, and I hope we don’t, but should we do that, I would encourage this circle in this General Assembly to also have the courage -- as New Hampshire has done -- to come back and revisit and possibly correct the possible impact that we made to our state. We have to create a state that is sustainable and that is predictable going into the future. We cannot artificially set the marketplace. The marketplace is far bigger than any of us, and I’m quite afraid the raising of the minimum wage will dramatically and adversely impact our jobs and our businesses in our state.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Hwang. Senator Anwar.

SENATOR ANWAR (3RD):

Good evening, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Good evening.
SENATOR ANWAR (3RD):

Thank you for this opportunity. So, I’ve been listening to my colleagues for a little while, and I wanted to start by thanking Senator Kushner for her leadership in bringing this bill out and the hard work that you have done, and also Representative Porter has done, along with many of our colleagues. We have heard about a couple of things earlier in the conversation when one of my colleagues talked about choice and freedom — choice and freedom. You keep in mind the person who is actually on minimum wage right now has no choice and no freedom, and I’m going to try to explain this a little bit more because this -- this alternate reality was that look -- these individuals who are working 90+ hours a work should be educating themselves, and if they educate themselves they are going to suddenly become rich and well off. That is the -- the concept that was suggested earlier by one of my colleagues as well. Here’s the reality -- about a few years ago, I was the founder of the South Windsor Hunger Action Team, and then what we realized was that a lot of people in all of our communities whether a town is considered an affluent town or not so affluent town, there are people in our communities who are going hungry, and when we actually collaborated with our faith community to have food banks, we realized that the people who are using the food banks were fully employed. The people who are using the food banks in our communities are employed, except they cannot afford the food anymore because they are given so little wage, and now, some -- if they can’t feed themselves and they cannot feed their children, suddenly they are supposed to automatically go to higher education and go to vocational education. It’s a great concept. It needs to be pursued, but
feeding the people and having the shelter is the most basic thing.

At the current time with what we have at the current time with what we have as the current minimum wage, according to the average, an individual on current minimum wage would have to work 99 hours a week to be able to afford to rent a two-bedroom house -- apartment. Sorry. I’ll repeat this and let that sink in so you understand what we are talking about. An individual on current minimum wage will have to work 99 hours a week to afford to rent a two-bedroom apartment. We are talking about sustainability. The people in our society are not able to sustain their lives.

Now, just because somebody 40 years ago or 30 years ago had a good experience, it is all about the probability and economists have shown that what was possible 30 years ago in the American dream is no longer possible in the current times. We are not talking about the American dream anymore. We are talking about survival of people. Survival of people to have shelter and food with working full time. It’s not a lack of their ability to work. It’s not a lack of their willingness to work. They are doing what they are doing, but despite that they are unable to get the most basic thing that they would expect, so another data that you need to know is there are towns in our state, there are shelters in the towns of our state where the residents -- almost all the residents of the shelters are fully employed. Let that sink in. You’re fully employed, working, and you can’t even have a house? You’re living in a shelter and you’re dependent on somebody other -- in a faith community to be able to feed you. This is the ground reality we are dealing
with. And, then the perception that individuals have is not the ground reality for the people who are experiencing this. We have to start to step outside our comfort zone and go and work and live something with the people who are suffering in a different challenge. Then, we would have something that I feel we need to have infusion. In my future life, I would like to have a medicine which would actually cause people to have empathy for each other. Empathy means experiencing from somebody else’s experience, not looking at it from your own experience. You had a good experience so that means everybody else has a good experience. That’s not empathy. Empathy is to understand where somebody else is and what their reality is and then having respect for that. I wish we could infuse that in our society, in our community, in the circle, in our hearts, me, myself, or that matter. Because without empathy, we will be talking about the alternate reality that oh don’t worry about food, don’t worry about shelter, go to a vocational training, and then you can suddenly be able to get well. Well, you have to have the basic things, and this is what the expectation is. Can we get closer to the basic things?

Some other datapoints that you need to recognize. We have talked about the teenagers, the majority of the people, almost 89 percent of the people are our teenagers who are on minimum wage. So, while we will spend a majority of our conversation on some of the teenagers, we actually need to realize the individuals we are trying to impact are not teenagers, overwhelming majority of them. About 65 percent of them are women, about one-third of them have children. This is the reality that we are seeing in the lives of individuals. I think it’s
important if we cannot understand what some people are experiencing. We have to try to live in those experiences. About a year or so ago, I started to live on minimum wage with respect to just eating $4.34 because that’s what the SNAP program has. You cannot survive, and the federal government is saying they’re going to cut that by 30 percent. People are going to die, which we used to read about in other parts of the world, what was happening in other parts of the world. You do realize that we are, through the policy makers who live in the alternate reality, would be impacted.

Let’s look at other data. Economists have looked at what does -- what is the impact of minimum wage on the jobs and the economy of the state of a community? Overall, does not have any negative impact. People spend more when they have more because people are not out partying or anything. They’re actually getting the basic things -- food for the children, the economy starts to get stimulated. This is a very, very basic thing. Very basic thing that when you have the resources you are going to stimulate the economy by buying because they become consumers. Right now, we don’t have enough consumers because they don’t have enough resources to be able to consume. We need to build this up and be able to improve it to the level where it becomes reasonable, appropriate for individuals to be able to have some sense of life -- some sense of life.

Today, we have a moral argument in front of us. People will look at it from a financial end. People will look at from all different ends, and -- and data would suggest that those are sound. The question is a moral question and the definition of
who we are as a society, who we are and what do we see as our present and our future. Somebody felt that the past was beautiful. I doubt it. From various perspective and that’s another conversation. What is our present and what is our future? And, it’s a moral question as a society -- where do we see ourselves? So, empathy, thinking about the reality, recognizing that if you are fortunate does not make ever single human being in the planet as fortunate as you are. And, especially in our own community, this is our responsibility and then take care of the few people who are actually in need and then the ones who are not afraid to work hard, and to value -- or to devalue people and say this individual who is working for 80 hours a week is not worth the money? I don’t even know how to begin to talk about that. I thought our value was that we valued everybody who worked hard no matter what work they did. But I heard my friends, my colleagues say that they would value them less because for whatever reason, which is beyond my comprehension right now.

I could speak for hours, Madam President. I could speak for hours, but -- but that wouldn’t be enough, but I just wanted to -- you to know that this is a moral question and -- and I don’t know why we even have this question. I don’t know why we are having a conversation on this because it’s a pretty straightforward thing. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Anwar. Will you remark further? Senator Berthel.

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND):

Good evening, Madam President.
THE CHAIR:

Good evening.

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND):

Madam President, I do rise in opposition to the legislation before us. I rise today once again deeply concerned about the action we are about to undertake in this Chamber. Every day I hear from the businesses in my district both large and small about how damaging this minimum wage legislation will be to their prospects for the future of their businesses in Connecticut.

The proponents of this bill have argued that Connecticut must provide a better minimum wage for all workers regardless of the cost. I disagree. The proponents of this bill have argued that our businesses in Connecticut can easily afford the increase in wages in large part by reducing the profits they may currently enjoy. I disagree. The proponents of this bill have argued that this legislation will increase the number of jobs in Connecticut and the opportunity for more people to work. I disagree. The proponents of this bill have argued that this increased minimum wage will inject more money into our local economy. I also disagree. The reality of this legislation as it is before us is that our employers both large and small cannot afford to pay a higher wage. Their cost of doing business in Connecticut is some of the highest in the nation. Their margins are some of the smallest in the nation. They pay some of the highest energy costs and some of the highest overall taxes.

We heard -- we have heard some compelling and even heartbreaking stories tonight, and I have another
one. Earlier, Senator Sampson spoke about Forum Plastics in Waterbury, and I would ask you to imagine for a moment being the proud owner of that business -- a business that employs 153 people in Waterbury. The city in Connecticut with the highest unemployment rate in the state and one of the highest in the country, and your business is manufacturing plastic parts for the medical industry. Imagine being this business owner tonight, right now watching this debate, preparing to tell your 153 employees that tomorrow you will be shutting your business down and putting 153 people out of work in the city with the highest unemployment rate in the state of Connecticut because you simply cannot afford to pay a $15 dollar minimum wage. Imagine being the business owner that will terminate 153 loyal quality employees because you cannot afford to do business in Connecticut. The owners of this company said today, “We want to stay. We don’t want to be forced out, but if you do raise the wage to $15 dollars per hour, we will have no choice but to leave, and it’s very sad.” They went on to say that the minimum wage increase will drive profit margins for their company of roughly 8 percent to a little over 2 percent, making it nearly impossible to stay in business and remain competitive with other companies. They went on to say many of our law makers don’t realize that Forum Plastics competes globally. “We’re competing against companies in China and Mexico, and those companies have competitive wages. It’s a challenge.” And, lastly, they said, -- most compelling and heartbreaking -- “Most of us have been in Connecticut our entire lives, and we’d like to work here for the remainder of our careers.”
And, they question, “Is it too late for us to do anything about this?”

First and foremost, we must understand that minimum wage jobs exist for the same reason that a supervisor’s job exists or a manager’s job exists, or a vice-president’s job exists. Different levels of skill, different levels of responsibility, different levels of management are all factors among many others that determine the difference in a wage that someone earns. The reality is as has already been spoken to tonight that some demand -- some jobs demand a higher wage because of their responsibilities, the skills, the number of people being managed among others, and some jobs demand a lower wage for the same reasons, and the reality is that an employer whether nonprofit or for profit, whether publicly owned or privately owned determines all of the factors of their finances when they price the services they provide or the product they produce including the cost of labor, which includes the hourly wage. You know, I’m not an economist, but it’s not difficult at all to understand that some jobs simply do not warrant a higher wage, and that being forced to pay a higher wage positions the employer poorly as it tries to compete in the Connecticut marketplace and economy. These employers simply cannot afford the cost of a higher minimum wage. Some argue that our business in Connecticut are rolling in profits, and they have an obligation to share those profits with their employees by supporting an increase in minimum wage. You know, i disagree with that as well. We live in the greatest country in the world, the best example of capitalism and a free market anywhere. The decision to share profits, the decisions as to the wages that are paid in a capitalistic free-market
economy are made by the leaders of these businesses with limited government interference by definition.

Our wonderful businesses in Connecticut, some local to my neck of the woods as we like to say, businesses like Fascia’s Chocolates, Quassy Amusement Park, and Connecticut Basement Systems -- just three examples have all explained to me the impact an increase in minimum wage will have on them as employers. This includes increased prices for their products, increased Worker’s Compensation insurance cost, increased unemployment taxes, increased payroll tax expense. When these businesses create their revenue through the sale of their products and services, they only have a few options to cover these increased costs, and I think I understand this. The options are pretty simple. They either increase the cost of their product or they decrease the expense of doing business, so let’s talk about the prospect of increasing the cost of a product in Connecticut.

We’re already threatening this session to add tolls to our highways, which will increase the cost of everything as essentially everything we create and consume in Connecticut travels on a highway to get where it’s going that will likely have a toll booth on it. our businesses will need to increase the cost of their products to address the cost of tolls. We’re already threatening this session to add an expanded FMLA coverage, which will also add to the cost of business, requiring our businesses to increase, again, the cost of their products and services. But, at last, this bill is about increasing the minimum wage -- not tolls, not FMLA, so let’s talk real numbers about the impact about the increase in minimum wage on an iconic
Connecticut employer -- Quassy Amusement Park in Middlebury. Quassy is in its 111th year of operation continuous in Connecticut with three generations of the same family running the business. George Francis, co-owner of Quassy, testified before the Labor Committee on March 7, and stated that an increase of 25 cents increases his seasonal payroll by $26,000 dollars, so let’s do some simple math. Under the provisions of this bill, next May 2020, when Quassy opens for the season, George Francis and his partners will have an increase in their seasonal payroll of $104,000 dollars. Now, I have no idea what it cost Mr. Francis to run his amusement park, to keep all the rides operating safely, to keep all those brightly colored lights shining that thrill children and -- and adults alike as they walk through the park, and how to keep all the various concessions stocked and ready to serve, but I also have no idea after a lot of conversations with Mr. Francis about how he will automatically cover $104,000 dollar increase in his payroll. I can only assume as the reasonable person -- any reasonable person would that Quassy generates its revenue from admission fees and the concessions it sells, and that cost of a day at Quassy Park will go up, along with the cost of a hotdog, fries, cotton candy, and a cold beverage all because we say so tonight via the legislative process. That is not capitalism and that is not the free market. You know, maybe Quassy can absorb all of that $104,000 dollars and just reduce the amount of profits they earn. As I see it, it’s a tough balance between keeping the price of admission to something reasonable that most people can afford versus raising the price and making the park unaffordable for some, and I assure you that that’s not something
knowing Mr. Francis -- that he would prefer to do. I can only guess that Mr. Francis may have to consider eliminating some jobs, and mind you, Quassy is a first employer for many local young people in the region. What a terrible conundrum we create for a 111-year-old company, three-generation business that is one of the largest employers and taxpayers in the town of Middlebury.

Another employer, Bob LaBonne, Jr., co-owner of LaBonne’s markets, a chain of supermarkets in Connecticut, has expressed some more concerns. While Quassy is a choice of entertainment and some consider a luxury item, the products that LaBonne sells -- groceries, food, the basic necessities of everyday life are not luxuries. Mr. LaBonne is also a large first-time employer of young people and very proudly states that he is a training ground for entry-level youths, teaching them responsibility, job skills, and behaviors. Mr. LaBonne has indicated that in order to address an increase in minimum wage, the cost of products he sells will need to go up, again, creating the conundrum now of not whether or not you can go on a rollercoaster ride and eat cotton candy, but creating the conundrum of a consumer needing to make a choice between something they truly need versus something they can actually afford. Another area that will suffer are the donations that LaBonne’s markets makes to local charities like food banks. They’re a supermarket chain after all, and those food banks critically rely upon the support of LaBonne’s.

Both leaders of Quassy and LaBonne’s have also spoken to automation within their business. Every one of us in this room have seen this play out in large chain stores like Walmart, Stop and Shop, and
McDonald’s where self-service kiosks, self-check out registers, and other machines have replaced people in these stores. Businesses like Quassy and LaBonne’s are no different -- being forced to explore and evaluate automation and machines over people, and I wonder how many people earning minimum wage today with hopes of increases under the provisions of this bill would support these increases of they knew their jobs were going to be eliminated and replaced by a machine -- so much for $15 dollars an hour.

During a Starbucks -- during a visit to Starbucks this morning prior to my arrival here, I had three different employees -- I freely admit I like Starbucks. I drink it every day. So, I see these people every day when I go in and get my ice coffee. Three different employees pulled me aside, they came around the counter -- “Senator Berthel, I need to speak to you about something.” And, they didn’t want anyone else to hear it, and they said, “Please, do not support $15 dollar minimum wage.” And, I looked at them and I said, “Really?” I said, “How much do you make? Can you tell me? Do you care? I won’t -- I won’t identify you personally. I won’t say, hey you” you know, and they knew -- “I make $10.20 an hour. I make 10 cents over minimum wage.” Each one of these three employees understood beyond any reasonable doubt by looking what has happened to Starbucks stores in other states in the country where the minimum wage has already gone up. They know beyond any reasonable doubt that they can be replaced by a machine. There are Starbucks machines that exist where you and I can go up and place our own order, and the machine will drop the cup and fulfill the order the same way that the person does behind the counter. The only thing it doesn’t do is
hand it to you and doesn’t say thank you and have a nice day, and they’re very concerned.

The reality is that increasing the minimum wage would force businesses to lay off employees and raise unemployment levels. The Congressional Budget Office projected that a minimum wage increase a few years ago from $7.25 to $10.10 would result in the loss of 500,000 jobs, and a recent survey of 1200 businesses and human resource professionals, 38 percent of employers who currently pay minimum wage said they would lay off some employees if the minimum wage was raised to $10.10, 54 percent said they would decrease hiring levels. San Francisco’s Office of Economic Analysis said that an increase to $15 dollars would reduce the city’s employment by about 15,270 private sector jobs. The reality is that a minimum wage increase would hurt businesses and force companies to close. Sixty percent of small business owners say that raising the minimum wage will hurt most small business owners according to a 2013 gallup poll. An executive at the fast food chain White Castle said the company would be forced to close almost half of its stores nationwide and let the thousands of workers if the federal minimum wage were raised to $15 dollars.

Forbes reported that an increase in the minimum wage has led to the closure of several Walmart stores and the cancelation of promised stores yet to open. The argument is also frequently made that an increased minimum wage increases the amount of dollars spent in the community. That seems logical -- higher wages, more money to spend, but when balanced against the reality of the impact increased minimum wage will have on jobs and the cost of products and
services, the argument is illogical, especially here in Connecticut.

And, again, as I spoke to a moment ago, add to this consideration for what else is coming at us before the end of this session with tolls and FMLA, and the minimum wage earner may find themselves in an even more difficult condition with regard to affording the cost of living in Connecticut. I am deeply concerned. I fear for the future of our great state. I hear every day from people and businesses regarding how Hartford continues to raise taxes to take more money out of our pockets to make living in Connecticut even less affordable. I hear from constituents every week who say to me, I’m saying goodbye to Connecticut, and our insatiable appetite for government spending. I hear from seniors who cannot make ends meet and have to make decisions between groceries and heat because of the cost of living in Connecticut. Small businesses cannot afford the provisions of this legislation. Small businesses make up more than 75 percent of the economic engine in Connecticut, and if we continue to toxify the environment in which these businesses must produce, sell, and provide their services, their threats to leave for friendlier ground will no longer be threats but a reality. We heard and received hours and pages of testimony against a $15-dollar minimum wage. We again find ourselves on the edge of a dangerous decision, one which I cannot and will not support. This legislation only adds to the economic crisis and disaster that is upon us in Connecticut. We should be focused as a legislative body on making our business climate more friendly in Connecticut. We should be focused on making living in Connecticut more affordable. We should be focused on reducing government spending in
Connecticut; thereby, reducing the taxes we collect and the biannual onslaught of new ways to tax and generate revenue. Once we have addressed those issues, once we are providing the best opportunity for people and businesses to be successful, only then should we consider the type of legislation that is before us right now.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Berthel. Will you remark further? Senator Slap.

SENATOR SLAP (5TH):

Thank you, Madam President. And, I want to thank, Representative Porter first and foremost for her very admirable work and stamina in the House just a few days ago, and her multiple hours on the floor shepherding this bill through. I am enthralled that the first time my experiencing standing here in the circle in the Senate speaking in favor of a bill is -- is this one, and I think it’s really speaks to what kind of economy we want to have in Connecticut and what kind of economy we do have, and I read a statistic recently that some of you may have seen, and the average income of the top 1 percent in Connecticut is 43 times what the bottom 99 percent take home. That is tops in the nation with one exception. Only New York State has a bigger income divide and more inequality than we do. And, so when I hear that we can’t raise the minimum wage, what I hear is there is no room for more fairness in our economy. Forty-three times what the bottom 99 percent take home, but there’s no room for the people who make the very lowest amounts to do any
better. Right? We can’t afford it, and inequality I know is something many of us have been fighting for or rather equality for -- for a long time, and I want to touch on another form of inequality, not just income inequality in terms of income bans, but also the gender wage gap, and we had a lot of conversations about that over the last few years, and I should say that 60 percent of minimum wage workers are women, and we know that when we increase the minimum wage and we have a strong minimum wage that disproportionately women and families are helped.

And, going back to my comment about inequality, we know that in the State of Connecticut right now that women are an on average about 80 cents on the dollar for the same job as a man, and on average, that cost women and their families more than $10,000 dollars every single year. So, that’s really money. So, what can we do about that? We can do nothing and we can let just free market capitalism take its course, and I would say that actually over the past 20 or 30 years in this country at the federal level, certainly, we’ve done that, and we’ve seen that unions have grown weaker, the minimum wage has not kept up, and we see rampant inequality, and it’s not good for our economy, and it’s not good for I would say democracy, so what can we do to push back because it hasn’t always been like this, and it doesn’t always need to be like this.

As you may recall, last year this General Assembly passed a pay equity bill, which is one piece of the puzzle I would suggest, and it passed in a very -- gratified to say this -- that it passed overwhelming bipartisan support in both Chambers, and as you recall, that pay equity bill eliminated the pay
history question, so it got rid of that salary
anchor that disproportionately women carry from one
job to the next to the next, and we are one of only
a handful of states now in the entire country where
that has been implemented. It just took effect
January 1.

So, I would submit to you that we have and can make
progress, but there is much more to do. It’s one
small piece. This is another big step forward. It
will lift children out of poverty. It will lift families -- hardworking families out of poverty. It
will reward hard work, and I’ve heard some of my
good colleagues, lament the prospect of another bill
that I hope will be calling in this circle very
soon, and that’s the paid family leave bill, and I
would suggest to you that is another important piece
of the puzzle to, again, help close the gender wage
gap, to help make our economy fairer, and to help
ensure that we all have equal opportunity.

The last thing I want to touch on. I know a lot of
us have been talking about our families and our
upbringing, and I see my colleagues on the other
side of the aisle have acknowledged that raising the
minimum wage will raise other wages, right? So,
it’s not just about those who make minimum wage but
that old axiom about, you know, the rising tide,
right, lifts -- lifts all boats, and I think that
that is true. As a child, I benefitted from that --
single mother, nurse, floor nurse, hadn’t got --
finished her degree when my folks were divorced, and
we were really struggling. We were close, you know,
to being in trouble. We -- we were -- managed to
get by, but I know that we benefitted from having a
strong minimum wage. This was in the state of
Massachusetts, and it wasn’t easy, and I saw how
hard she worked, and I think that people that work that hard and are that dedicated deserve a fair wage, and this is, again, a good step in the right direction.

So, I’m going to conclude my remarks and thank my colleagues who have worked so hard on this. I stand with you. I’m excited to vote for this, and hopefully, in the not too distant future.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Slap. Will you remark further? Senator Formica.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH):

Good evening, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Good evening.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH):

I rise for a few comments regarding the legislation at hand. I’ve listened as we all have to the stories and the conversation around this legislation and the reasons for and the reasons against, and I listened to Senator Flexer who said that more of us around the circle should know what that feels like, and I have great respect for all the Senators around the circle, and I have great respect for the work that we do, so I though perhaps I’ll share my story and talk a little bit about how I got here, and how I ended up perhaps beyond the opposite side of the conversation that some of my Senators are talking about. And, we’re talking about how we got here.
We all know my work history and my business. I talked a little bit the other day about my background, my grandfather from Sicily, and I think the longer you stand here and talk about these things it becomes deeply personal. So, my story started on July 9, 1964. I was 10, the oldest of five boys, when we got the news that my father had been killed, and it was left to my mother to raise those five boys. And, of course, that’s a life changer, and I had to go to work. I had to figure that out. She had to figure that out. We had to figure that out, and life’s not fair, but we figured it out as a family, and the work that I did at the IGA around the corner at age 15, and the work I did at the plumbing shop sorting copper at age 15 was not for the kids that most people had money for to go buy candy. It was to help us to eat, so I know what it’s about to struggle, and I struggled for many years personally after that, and I worked my whole life, and when I decided to get into business for myself, I decided to fight for working people, so no one, neither side, not one party has the right to say that they work for working people because everybody does. We all do in different ways and in different parts, so I made that my life’s work.

I’ve work for myself most of my adult life. I’m an employer since 1983. I’ve created hundreds, if not, thousands of jobs. When we started that business, it was me and my wife, and over the years, we hired high school students, we hired single moms, and in each case, we helped raise the quality of their life. I’m in the hospitality business, the service business, so this bill touches me on both sides of it, and I’m pleased to see there was recognition after the Committee on Appropriations passed this out to reflect that the right thing to do on the tip
credit because tipped employees make multiples of the numbers that we’re talking about today.

But, the other side of this bill will affect me in the back of the house -- dishwashers, prep cooks, cooks, and yes, rising tide, compression. [Sigh]. But I want to talk about my business a little bit and how this will affect, and I want to talk a little bit about this legislation because if we look at this legislation and the minimum wage raises that have occurred over time, I believe they are 2006, 2007, 2009, 2014. Those wages went up an average of 45 cents each occurrence. This bill contemplates in 3-1/2 or 4 short years $1.90, $1.50, and $1.50, and I submit that might be a little aggressive. I submit that that might not be the incremental increases that will be good both for the people that are receiving that wage and for the people that are paying that wage. So, I think that that should be altered in this bill, and I’m not, again, naive enough to think that this bill is not going to pass tonight. But again, I talked about my fight for working people, people that work hard in my restaurant and earn every penny that they make whether they are back in the kitchen or out front, and that compression is a true event, and it’s not that it’s a bad thing people get a raise. It’s not a bad thing at all. Nobody wants to have people work for money that they can’t afford to live on, but businesses are a lifeblood of our economy. Small business creates 80 percent of the jobs in this country -- 80 percent, not Sikorski’s, not EB, not Pratt and Whitney, not Pfizer -- small business. That’s where the job creation is coming from.

And, the pressures that this Assembly is putting on small business is making it difficult for small
business to make the profits necessary so that they can continue to pay taxes, so they continue to employ people, so they continue to invest in capital infrastructure, which raises the opportunity for property taxes, which raises the opportunity for community involvement, because that’s what it’s about. Everything’s connected. You know, I often talk about government and business and community being like a blueberry pie. You take one slice out, the blueberries inch toward each other again, and everything’s connected, and that’s what’s happening around here. We’re talking about earned income, working for a living, and artificially setting or arbitrarily setting a rate for that income I don’t believe is the correct answer.

I talked in Appropriations the other day about prime costs. That’s what I look for in my business to see if we’re going to be profitable. Prime cost is simply the product cost and the labor cost added together, and I look at that prime cost. Certainly, I am aware of the other overhead costs, but I look at that prime cost, and if it hits a number, then I start to become not profitable, and this bill will put pressures on that prime cost.

When you talk about tolls, that’s gonna put pressure on the prime cost because it’s gonna raise the cost of goods that are coming into the restaurant or any business because somebody’s gonna have to absorb those extra costs. When you talk bout adding specific taxes just for the privilege of being in a certain industry -- a 1 percent extra sales tax or 1.5 percent tax on a soda, that’s gonna put pressure on my prime cost ‘cause while a 20 cent tax on a Coca-Cola may not be all that expensive, I’m just wondering how many people are going to switch to
water. My servers are still going to have to deliver that water, so it’s not gonna save me any money.

All of the other stuff that we’re talking about. There’s been a lot of talk about women in the workforce tonight. I employ a lot of single moms. My business is predominantly women run, and six out of the top eight people that are paid in my restaurant, the highest earners are women, and I will tell you that all six of those women started as servers, most of them over 20 years ago. [Technical difficulties]. All right. It’s better than the -- better than the hook that had on that show one time, right? [Laughter]. But these women, these single moms, these great people that work for me each and every day, they help each other. That culture that we have there of those single moms helping each other, getting through the day and raising the quality of their life, they’ve been able to buy cars. They’ve been able to buy homes. They’ve been able to send their kids to college because they started at a low-paying job, and they worked their way up, and they earned, and what they gave to the business allowed us to prosper.

High school kids from the high school that’s right behind us, we hired a lot of those folks. We gave them chances, gave them their first jobs, and you know when you’re training a new student or you’re training a new employee, in this case, they’ll get minimum wage -- training wages -- it takes two people. Somebody’s got to take that person around the first two weeks, three weeks, or four weeks and show them how to do their job, so at $15 dollars an hour, that would be not times one, that’d be times two that I’d be paying until that training. That’s
why there’s provision for a training wage. That’s why I disagree with the change to 90 days -- not measured 90 days -- just an arbitrary block in time 90 days. You could work four days during that period of time. I could hire a high school kid the week before Christmas to peel all the -- help peel all the shrimp we need, and they wouldn’t work again until perhaps April too much. They might work two, three, or four shifts in the winter, get ready for summer, but buy that time, according to this bill, the 90-day clock would be up.

I’m gonna tell you a story about Lucia. Lucia has worked for me for 22 years. She used to work at Howard Johnsons. I don’t know if many of you are old enough in here to remember Howard Johnsons -- that was down the street from us -- but her driver used to bring her to Howard Johnsons every day, and the driver would come over and sit and have a cup of chowder and drop Lucia off, and then go pick her up a few hours later, and she came in one day, and she was crying -- the driver. And, I said, “What’s up?” And, she said, you know she goes in there and those cooks they push her down, they slap her in the back of the head, they make fun of her, they don’t let her eat. So, I said, “Well, this is what I’d like you to do. Tomorrow, don’t bring Lucia there, bring Lucia here, and Lucia can work here every day.” And, we created a job for Lucia, and she did, and she’s been there 22 years, and she’s special. She’s special in every way. She brings more joy to our business, more joy to our staff, but we’re able to have Lucia there. I don’t know what’s gonna happen with Lucia. She can’t make that much money or else she loses benefits. Lucia’s parents are both deceased. I don’t know what’s gonna happen with Lucia, but I would be greatly upset of this bill
forced her not to be able to come three or four days a week to come see us.

That’s what’s so important about a free market approach. We can take our passion. We can -- we can work our business. We can give back. We can fight for workers in the way that we fight for workers -- by providing a quality of life, by providing them an opportunity, the same opportunity that I did when I first started starting from nothing and working hard for much less than minimum wage -- I can tell you that in those days -- taking a chance, growing our business, investing in that, working in the community, and those employees that I’m fighting for and who work awful hard for me and fore the community and the people they serve, they get health insurance for which I pay 50 percent. I offer them an opportunity to get pension, 401 simple, which I match a portion of their pay. They get sick days. Their quality of life is first. They work a five-day week, they can work six if they want, and if they have a little league game or a band concert or a parent/teacher conference, they get to go to that first. That’s how I’m fighting for people.

So, no one has -- no one has the right to say that they fight for people and that this dollar amount is evidence of that. It’s different than that. Businesses fight for people every day. We are the lifeblood of the economy here. The pressures that are being put on the business, both small and large, are real, and they’re difficult -- working harder longer for less. And, again, I’m not unique. I’m one of thousands -- one of thousands in this state that do that, and we cannot keep putting pressure on those businesses or else what’s gonna happen is
those thousand businesses out there that perhaps are like mine, maybe will lose two or three people, four people, five people. How many people is that -- a thousand times four or five? And, are we prepared to suffer that job loss?

Automation -- there’s been some talk about automation. Technology -- we all walk around with these things in our pocket that do more things than probably that first spaceship that sent to the moon. Automation is here. We all see it in McDonald’s. We all see it in all of the places that we go -- kiosks for banking. I know somebody in the fulfillment business, and the fulfilment business is somebody that prepares orders for other people like Publisher’s Clearing House, etc., and this fulfilment company sends out 15 to 20-million packages each year. They’re very successful, and they hire a lot of people to put those packages together, and I was talking to them the other day, and they said, “You know, it didn’t pay for us to automate when minimum wage was $10 dollars or $12 dollars an hour, but it’s gonna pay for us to automate when minimum wage gets to $13.50 or $15 dollars an hour, and so all those labels on those 20-million boxes are probably going to come out of a machine pretty soon, and we have to watch for that unintended consequence.

Senator Sampson read off a few letters. Bigelow Tea, 70 years in Connecticut -- “30 percent hire our cost to do business in Connecticut, but I love it here, but then our facilities in Kentucky and Idaho. Unfortunately, this increase in minimum wage will significant impact our opportunity to do business.” This woman says, “My small business began in Wethersfield in 2014, another in 2015, a food truck
in 2016, more expansion in 2018, and I employ over 40 people ranging in age from 17 to 50. I pay them well and provide an excellent respectful work environment. They make limited tips but are not considered servers. My net profit was 10 percent. With this minimum raise, I will be out of business in October 2019. Forget about ’20, ’21, and beyond.” This next one, “I work for 30 days to provide for my family as a single mom, and I’m vehemently against this idea. This increase will put me out of business.” And, then this one from a homecare agency. They like the minimum wage idea. They think it’s a good idea, but in the next sentence, they say, we have to -- we have to as a state budget in order for them to absorb this minimum wage and to take care of the people they take care of, we got to give them more money ‘cause their business is not sustainable. Their business model is not sustainable without the support from the State of Connecticut.

So, Madam President, I hate that this is turning into a party tough conversation. This is a people conversation, and we need to have people conversations here because we all have stories like Senator Winfield and Senator Flexer and me, and probably many in all of you. But we have to find a way to work together, to talk together, to sit down in a way that bills like this come out so that they benefit everybody. It’s win/win, not an arbitrary number that says this job is not worth this, which means the guy that’s making $12 dollars now has to make $14 dollars, the guy that’s making $14 dollars now has to make $16 dollars. Everything bumps up. It’s conversation, it’s collaboration, it’s communication, and it’s common sense. That’s what we need to do. One side shouldn’t just be able to
throw this out, and I would argue at 9 o’clock at night no less. But that’s where we are, so I lend my small voice and my little story about why I think this perhaps is not the best way, why I think that perhaps it may cost more jobs than create more jobs. Why I think that small businesses smaller than mine -- I’m lucky enough to have a few employees, but small businesses with one or two or three or four may not be able to absorb that. And, then what happens? And, what happens to the community that we serve?

So, Madam President, I just have -- well, no, maybe I won’t for the moment. But I’m grateful to be here. I’m grateful to be here to share this story because as I told these high school kids that were here today this is the greatest state and the greatest country in the world, and the message of this building is the history and the culture and the tradition that they see here and feel here each and every day, and that’s what this is about, but this legislation is one-sided. We need to figure out a way to make it multiple sided.

So, thank you, Madam President. I appreciate the opportunity to stand here and to share my voice.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Formica. Will you remark further? Senator Lesser.

SENATOR LESSER (9TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, before I get to the heart of my remarks, I do want to correct what I think might have been a misstatement -- the one of our colleagues mentioned earlier
speaking about one company in Connecticut -- Quassy Amusement. I do want to make clear. I looked up after remarks were made about that company, and did discover that on both federal law -- the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act and Connecticut law 31-58e of the Connecticut general statutes amusement parks like Quassy are exempted and aren’t covered by this law at all, and I want to state that for the record, but I do want to respond as well to what I believe are really sincere remarks we’ve heard from members of both parties, and I’ve listened intently over the last few hours, and I believe that every member of this Chamber is speaking sincerely and to their own experiences while debating this bill, but I also know that as we sit here beneath this golden dome on these leather-backed chairs with this wooden paneling we in this building have a tendency to hear from the people who are in this building and who are those people? Those folks more often than not are lobbyist or people who have business in the state Capitol, but we hear from the people who own the businesses. Often, we don’t hear from the people who work in those businesses. We’ve had a lot of discussion tonight. We’ve had a lot of discussion tonight about one particular company, about Forum Plastics. We’ve heard what the owners of that company have had to say, but what we haven’t heard from are from the people who work at that company. I want to read what one person who works there -- Miriam Rodriguez, 29 -- and according to the Republican American tonight -- Miriam Rodriguez, 29, is a single mother of three children -- ages 11 months, 3, and 10. She has been working at Forum Plastics for four years, and remains classified as a temporary employee at $10.10 per hour. That is the minimum wage currently in Connecticut. Rodriguez
works 40 hours a week and receives food stamps. This is what Miriam Rodriguez has to say, “I believe pay increase is a good idea,” Rodriguez said. “We would be able to afford what we want and pay bills. We work very hard with what we do, but it still isn’t enough. It still isn’t enough.

You know, Madam President, I think Connecticut can compete. I think we can compete in this state. I think we can compete because I think we have in Connecticut the most skilled workforce in the world. I think we have a strategic location. I think we out skill, we outwork anybody when it comes to precision manufacturing, when it comes to the sectors of tomorrow. But you know where we can’t compete? We can’t compete on a race to the bottom. We can’t compete when it comes to misery, and we should not be subsidizing employers, Madam President. We should not be subsidizing employers with food stamps, with benefits who fail to pay their workers a living decent wage.

You know, Madam President, I spend a lot of time listening to my constituents. I’ve held many townhall forums and coffee this year. I’ve spent a lot of time knocking on doors and listening to people, and when you go out of this building and you listen to people, there’s a difference between what they’re experiencing and the numbers that we see on the page. Because when you talk to economists, they say that next month this country will be experiencing the longest economic expansion in American history. It started in June 2009, and it continues to the present. That is reality. That’s what economists say, but when you talk to ordinary people in Connecticut, they would laugh at you because although that economic growth has been
happening, it hasn’t trickled down to ordinary working men and women. The people of Connecticut need a raise. It has been far too long since they have seen that raise. When we look back to periods in the past when the economy has felt like it was growing -- in the 1950s, the average worker made 1/20th that of the CEO. Today -- today, that is now 1360th -- 1/360th. What does that mean? That means that no matter how hard you work, no matter how tight you tie your shoelaces, no matter how early you get up in the morning you can’t get ahead. The American dream for too many people -- for too many people in my generation, it’s slipping away, and there is one reason for that. It’s not because the economy isn’t growing. It’s because wages haven’t caught up with economic growth. This bill makes an important step in the right direction. We have an opportunity to raise wages for our own constituents to allow them to feel the economic growth that we know exists, but we have to do that by voting in support of this bill, and I urge all of my colleagues to do so.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Lesser. Will you remark further? Senator Kelly.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST):

Thank you very much, Madam President, and good evening.

THE CHAIR:

Good evening.
SENATOR KELLY (21ST):

I rise in support of hope. I rise in support of self-worth. I rise in support of opportunity for that American dream that we’ve heard all too often tonight that doesn’t exist in Connecticut anymore. What a sad commentary on Connecticut. We just heard, and I agree that since 2009 our country has experienced the largest expansion in our history, but it didn’t trickle down to Connecticut. Connecticut not only lags behind national growth, it lags behind New England growth and in our region. For the last nine years, I’ve sat here and watched systemically the imposition of Malloy’s new economic reality that has visited every household in Connecticut. The stories we hear around this circle are compelling. We all know that. We all know somebody who has been negatively affected by this new economic reality. We ourselves have been affected by this reality because it exists, and Governor Malloy and his economic development or his economic OPM secretary where the ones that talked about this. That the Connecticut economy was never going to be the economy of old that was always full of hope, opportunity, that was gonna grow, and be -- be able to provide. That we had to start to realize that our economic growth was limited, and that we were no longer going to aspire to the best. That’s what we’re hearing. We’re hearing about policies that focus on just trying to keep what you have, not trying to do better and move forward.

At one time, the good Senator that shared Stafford with me, Ed Gomes, used to talk, and we would sit here and talk about what it used to be like in the greater Bridgeport area when you needed a job. You could work in a factory, do your honest eight, and
if you didn’t like what was going on in your factory, you could walk down the street to another one and either get a job and often at a higher pay. You’re lucky if you have a job in Connecticut today. That’s a big difference -- a big difference. Just in the last two years there have been a number of companies that have asked DOL to issue warn notices -- Bridgewater Associates, New England Motor Freight, Aramark, AT&T Call Center, Bristol Myers, McKesson, Dannon, Konica, Harvey Chain. Black and Decker just said that they’re gonna create 500 jobs in Texas. Why not Connecticut? Because of the choices that are made under this dome that impact the people we serve.

Yesterday, I ran an amendment that asked if we could somehow, someway come up with a $12 dollar a month ability to give to seniors. That got shut down and pushed aside. Today, we’re going to talk about a $15 dollar an hour living wage, but yesterday, there was no dignity wage for seniors who had worked their life, who had done their time, who had paid their dues. They survived the depression, they beat the Germans and the Japanese, they put a man on the moon, and yet, the greatest generation doesn’t get $12 dollar a month but abled-bodied individuals are gonna get $15 dollars an hour. Government choices -- government choices that either will create opportunity or not.

For the last eight years, Governor Malloy and his administration taxed Connecticut’s economy to death. It created government interference where we didn’t need it, and the result -- we heard it. While the rest of the country, the rest of the region, other states are experiencing economic expansion we’ve never seen, economic hardship is visiting
Connecticut middle-class families. It visits it on a daily basis, and we all feel it. It is -- it is not a great fact that somebody has to work 99 hours to pay their rent. That’s a sad statement, but that’s the new economic reality of Dan Malloy’s economy. And, when are we going to learn that his economic policies are not going to save Connecticut? They haven’t for the last eight years. They aren’t going to do it if we double down now, but that’s exactly what we’re looking at doing because we visited this minimum wage issue before. And, what did it do? Did it bring the opportunity? Did it bring the American dream to Connecticut’s families? No. No. The economic expansion passed us by, and we do have a skilled labor force and we do put the economic resources into education to train our children. Unfortunately, we’re training them for jobs in Texas, in North Carolina, in the Dakotas -- everywhere but Connecticut because they can’t survive here. Quite frankly, because we’re looking for more minimum wage jobs. That’s the economy that you’re trying to create -- minimum wage jobs, not jobs that are gonna actually pay the mortgage, pay for an education, afford a house, and to make our communities stronger and more vibrant.

Basically, a return to what Connecticut was that we remember growing up here in this great state. Choices. Two years ago, we looked at creating a workforce development for the insurance industry, which is one of our flagship industries. Rather than picking on it with a public option, we should be looking at collaborating on it ‘cause these are good paying jobs. Better -- way better than minimum wage. It’s what the industry asked for. Passed both Chambers, signed by the governor twice, never met -- never met. So much for a better than
minimum wage job. We don’t care about that I guess in this place.

There was a bill I put forward that dealt with -- Buy Connecticut. While we have fantastic skilled jobs in the defense industry from EB to Sikorski, to Pratt and Whitney getting government contracts like never before. The Buy Connecticut bill would create incentives so that those companies would use Connecticut supply-line manufacturers to support their products. Do you think that bill could get out of committee? A bill that’s gonna do better than minimum wage jobs? No! ‘Cause that’s not what we want. That’s not part of Governor Malloy’s new economic reality.

We’re also looking at choices. Choices once again. What kind of Connecticut do we want? A Connecticut with tolls, with recreational marijuana, with gambling as if these are great social policies that will be the envy of the nation, that little kids growing up will say that’s what I’m going to aspire to? These are the types of initiatives that are going to set us apart and get us right back on that road that’s gonna not only be filled with opportunity, but it’s gonna be filled with ingenuity and creativity that was the bedrock of Connecticut’s economy. That’s what always set Connecticut apart, not more government. I get it. Big business is no picnic either. My dad was a brake shoe salesman. He worked for Raybestos, and yes. He was laid off at a time when it was difficult. We all have our stories ‘cause they’re looking at solely profits, but it’s our job to balance between these interests, between the big business interest, the big government interest, and put the people of Connecticut first. The first real full-time job I
had was at Duchess, and if anybody lives down in the
greater Bridgeport area, everybody knows that
Duchess does it fresh.  [Laughter].  I called it the
Harold Levitt School of Business because it’s many
of the same things that I learned there -- the
customer’s always right, how to balance the -- the
registered at the end of the night, the inventory.
Those skills I learned then I still use to this day.
I never thought I’d stay at Duchess my entire life.
That wasn’t the end of my career.  It was the
beginning.  It was the beginning.  It was the
opportunity.  The foot in the door.  That’s what we
take away from our youth with initiatives like we’re
discussing now.

Yesterday, I was driving my son to school -- 16
years old, he looked at me.  He’s like, “Hey dad, I
hear they’re gonna talk about increasing the minimum
wage.”  He goes, “What’s it gonna go from?  Ten
bucks to what?”  I said, “Fifteen.”  This is a
person who right now I’ve told, you know, you can’t
just sit around the house anymore.  You got to go
out and get a job.  Okay, so he’s looking.  He’s
thinking, okay, where am I gonna go?  And, he says
to me, “So, if somebody had two people working and
they were going to hire the third, that’s 30 bucks
an hour right now, but if you pass the minimum wage,
then they’re not gonna hire me ‘cause they’re gonna
spend the 30 bucks on the two people working.”  I
said, “You got it.  You got it.”

So, this bill gives more to people who have a job
and takes away that opportunity, that experience,
that American dream from people that don’t have a
job.  I don’t think that’s what Connecticut’s about.
Not the Connecticut I want to live in.  The
Connecticut I want to live in wants to empower our
people. Let -- let people go to work. Let’s let them advance themselves. That’s the initiatives we should be looking at, not ones that are going to say the youth aren’t going to get the experience. This is going to pass them by. Connecticut can do better. Connecticut must do better. Let’s choose a Connecticut that inspires the creativity, inspires the innovation, inspires that hope and opportunity that burns in the heart of everyone who wants a job and can get ahead and to facilitate that, to enable that conduct so that they can move forward and everybody in our state can move forward. Let’s make a difference for middle-class families. Let’s turn the page on Dan Malloy’s new economic reality rather than double down on it. Let’s make Connecticut what it can be. This bill doesn’t do that. this bill holds us back and keep us in that new economic reality. We have the opportunity this session to move forward and to break those shackles that hold our economy back. We’re one of the last ones, if not, the last one to enjoy the economic recovery that every other state has had, and it’s no small wonder. It’s the policies of that administration. Let’s not continue to make the same mistake. Let’s move in a different direction. Let’s give hope and opportunity to those who want it and deserve it rather than the mediocrity of that new economic reality.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Kelly. Will you remark further? Senator Abrams.

SENATOR DAUGHERTY ABRAMS (13TH):
Thank you, Madam President. Before I begin, I would just like to take a moment to thank the Labor Committee and our colleagues in the House and our leadership for having the great foresight to put two wonderful women, Senator Kushner and Representative Porter, and giving them the herculean task of bringing this legislation forward, and I thank them very much. When I stood here on January 9, and took this oath of office I used a quote from Eleanor Roosevelt. She said, “Use privilege to sow justice.” And, that’s what I intended to do each and every day that I came to this Capitol, and that has been what I will do today. I have been a very lucky person. I consider myself to have had great privilege, and that does not mean that I have had an easy life, that I don’t have a history like many people have spoken about today, but what it does mean is no one’s ever asked me to live off $21,000 dollars a year, to raise my children on $21,000 dollars a year working 40 hours a week, 8 hour days, 52 days a week for a wage that I cannot support a family on or even myself on. So, for that, I am privileged no matter what my circumstances have been, and anyone else who can say the same must also recognize that they too are privileged. I don’t think that this conversation has to be a this or a that, that you have to be on one side or another, but you do have to recognize the fact that we are asking people in our state, our neighbors, our friends, our relatives, maybe people we’ve never met to live off substandard wages, so to me, the minimum wage is not a minimum. It needs to be a fair wage. It needs to be a wage that someone can say that their work is valued, and that they can live off of the work that they’re doing.
I need to reflect on a couple of things that have been said in the circle. First of all, I thank Senator Flexer for reminding us about what our country’s history is based on and that we go back there, but also, someone else in the circle talked about the gilded age. I have a very, very different memory or learning about what the gilded age was about. Certainly, there was prosperity, but there was not prosperity for everyone. Many people lived in abject poverty. It was a time of dangerous working conditions and as an educator, I must say that it was also a time of child labor, and we would still be there if it weren’t for people like us who sit here and elected to come in and say what is fair, what is right, what kind of country we want to live in. People talked about that time as being industrial slavery, and there was great income inequality, and for me, the best thing about the gilded age was that it burst the Fair Labor Standards Act that gave us the eight-hour workday that made child labor laws, that talked about overtime pay, and really brought on what was then considered the progressive era, so when I think of the gilded age, the best thing about it was that it turned the tide.

I would also like to say that there are people who as someone else in the circle referred to the Fiscal Commission, and I would like to say that they actually recommended raising the minimum wage, so I think it’s important to point that out. I one who also talked about the fact that people talked about for one Bigelow Tea Company. When I just looked, the Bigelow Tea Company employs 350 people but made $90-million dollars, so I think there are companies out there that can absorb paying a higher minimum wage. I think that if you are willing to work hard
like people said, and I think Senator Anwar was speaking of this. It’s unrealistic to ask somebody to work for $21,000 dollars a year, working 40-hour weeks, 52 weeks a year, and still expect them to somehow go to school. I -- I don’t think that that can happen for most people, so I think if we really want to give people a fair wage, we can give them fair opportunities as well.

Lastly, I would say that we have right now a historic low in our unemployment rate. It’s at 3.8 percent in this state, so there are jobs out there. We can do this. So, again, I would say that I have been very privileged in my life. I -- I am very grateful for that, but I can’t move forward and feel as though I’m doing that at the expense of other people, so I think it’s my opportunity today to make a vote for those people who maybe have not had the same privileges I’ve had and to give them a chance in our economy.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Abrams. Will you remark further? Senator Bradley.

SENATOR BRADLEY (23RD):

“He who is greatest among thee shall be your servant.” That’s what Christ remarked to a woman when she asked the Lord that when -- when he’s in his glory would he mind placing this son on his right-hand side and this other son on his left-hand side, and he told the woman -- he said, “He who is greatest among thee, shall be your servant.” We talk a lot about raising this minimum wage and we
pin it between employee versus employer, and I can tell you being on both sides of that there’s a lot of good bosses out there. There’s a lot of people who know how to treat people right, who have an ethos and a mission statement to make sure that they share their wealth, to make sure that their employees are well taken care of, and I don’t believe in this myth of the self-made man. I wouldn’t be able to be here in this Chamber tonight if it wasn’t for the seven girls who I call them, who are old enough to be my mother, who work at my law office and make sure the work gets done on a daily basis. I wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for my brother who’s an attorney who works at my law office to make sure that the clients are -- are cared to. I wouldn’t be able to be here if it wasn’t for a community that supported me to stand here at 12 o’clock in the morning. It’s about taking care of people. It’s about equity. It’s about making sure that we look after people, and I don’t think that every corporation in Connecticut is malevolent. I don’t think every employer in the State of Connecticut doesn’t get it, doesn’t make sure they pay their employees right.

I think that on both sides of the aisle we get it, so it’s not about who holds the vacuum on justice and righteousness and looking after people, but it’s about looking at actual policies, and I’m moved by stories. We all have our individual stories, but it’s about looking at actual policies of how we’re going to preserve this great nation. How we’re going to preserve not just the freedoms that we have but the capitalistic system that we all say has created prosperity, and there’s different models to that, and we talk like some senators have remarked about times of old and history. People came to this
nation not just looking for religious freedoms but economic freedoms, and we’ve seen models and monarchs who say I am God walking on earth, and these people who I have dug my knights and my nobles. These are the worthy class who are worthy of owning land and property, and all the rest of us the respect of our talents and abilities were peasants, were unworthy of holding any land and property and title and nobility, and we’ve seen what that model does. It caused a lot of Europeans to leave from Europe and come to the Americas in the hopes for a prosperous nation, and what do we say here in America? No one’s too big. No one’s too strong. No one’s too mighty. That government will be big brother in shepherding us and making sure that no corporation will hinder our growth, making sure that no business will make great work environments that stop prosperity. We know what it looks like when we give to the top. That’s been tried before. Circle down economics. It’s been tried before, and we’re not talking about the gilded age or the days of monarchs. We’re talking about very recent in our history, and it doesn’t trickle down. It doesn’t get down to the worker. Unfortunately, greed overpowers a lot of people, and there are those bosses and there are those corporations that don’t look after their employee. So, it’s up to us -- the people in the circle, the people in the state to ensure that every single American irrespective of their skin color, their race, their creed is protected. That they have the ability to have a living wage. I hear a lot of members on the opposite side of the aisle who said who were sick of people who are on -- who on the social programs and get housing and food stamps and all this government assistance and they never get
off of it. Well, the reality is you’re making $10.10 an hour and you go work at a minimum wage place, and you don’t get -- you didn’t get a quality education, you don’t come from a place where people are helping you pull yourself up, and now you’re stuck because it’s easier to stay on the social program than it is to work in this McDonald’s or work in this other corporation, and you can’t ever seem to rise above that. This is the type of program that’s going to ensure that we don’t see that -- people stuck in the same place. These are the type of initiatives that we’re going to make sure that people can actually join the middle class. These are the things that protect us, and listen, let’s -- let’s call a spade a spade. There will always be poor people. There will always be people who now today are making $15 dollars, and after we pass this, they’re gonna say, well, now I should be making $20 dollars, but I can tell you as an employer, I don’t stop working hard because I might have to get more employees. I don’t stop trying to acquire more because I have to pay my employees more. It’s a -- it’s a point of pride to be able to say I pay my employees well, and it’s -- it’s not just pride and -- when you sign a check to them. It’s the way they treat you during Christmas and they put you at the head of the table, and with pride, they say, this is my boss. It’s a point of pride when you treat people well and they say, you know what, you’re not just my boss but I want you to be the godfather to my child because you treat people right. It’s a point of pride for any person who’s ever employed anyone but more importantly, it is about saying people we can do more. If capitalism is going to survive, if America is going to survive, we have to do more. Raising the minimum
wage to $15 dollars, I pray to God in a few years or
more we continue with this age or prosperity and
this -- and this initiative works -- because it has
worked. The minimum wage has worked. Unions and
people who fight for working class people. It has
worked. So, we -- why are we fighting against
things that we know protect every day working
people? Why do we want to create a system of the
has and the have nots where corporations and big
money harbor this money? It doesn’t make any sense.

Now, in light of that, I know that there’s not going
to be a lot of opinions swayed, and this might go
down party line, I truly vacillated over whether
this makes sense or not, but at the end of the day,
I honestly believe that if we care about Nutmeggers,
if we care about the State of Connecticut, we have
to make sure we give every single person a living
wage, and this $15 dollar minimum wage is a start,
and I hope in a few years from now, Senator Kushner,
with your leadership, will be increasing even more
and corporation will be prospering and Connecticut
will be prospering.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Bradley. Will you remark
further? Senator Logan. Good morning, sir.

SENATOR LOGAN (17TH):

Good morning. Thank you, Madam President. I stand
in opposition to this bill. I believe that
artificially, forcibly increasing Connecticut’s wage
requirement will hurt our economy, and I believe it
will hurt the very people that this bill was
intended to help. Connecticut’s current minimum wage is well above the federal minimum wage, and Connecticut’s current minimum wage is already among the highest in the nation. I believe people will lose jobs if we increase the minimum wage to $15 dollars an hour. Where do I come up with that opinion? How did I develop that opinion? Well, I represent several towns here in Connecticut, and in each of those towns whether it’s Ansonia or Derby or Naugatuck, Bethany or Beacon Falls or Woodbridge or Hampton, I have had business owners come up to me and tell me that if we increase the minimum wage to $15 dollars an hour they will reduce their workforce. They will not hire more people.

One example is in Naugatuck is Al’s Hot Dogs. You know, if you go to Naugatuck from the lower part of the valley, up Route 8, you get off at the exit 26 on Route 63, as soon as you get off, Al’s Hot Dog Stand is staring you right in the face. As much as I’m trying to keep my weight down, I just can’t help his irresistible hot dogs. I go in there. he’s got a bunch of folks working there, and once they found out I was a — I’m a state Senator, Al says, “Senator!” He said, “Don’t let them raise that minimum wage to $15 dollars an hour.” He goes, “Look at me here.” He goes, “I own a small business. I won’t be able to keep all these people employed, and people will lose their jobs.”

When you take a look at a company and they’re looking at how they’re gonna make ends meet in terms of — of run their business, still try to eke out a profit -- Because regardless of what many folks think -- they think of businesses, they think of large businesses, but most of the companies here in Connecticut that are hiring most of the people that
work here in Connecticut are medium sized, and they’re small businesses like Al’s Hot Dog Stand that you know maybe has ten people total that work there, and they look at their payroll, and they can only afford a certain payroll, so we can go and increase the minimum wage by a third, but it doesn’t mean that Al at Al’s Hot Dog Stand can increase his payroll.

When I went to a ribbon cutting in Hamden, the Southern part of Hamden. It was a beautiful ribbon cutting for a business that was -- made modifications, you know, to their restaurant, and it was a wonderful event, you know, and we went inside the restaurant, and I looked over and I say, hey, what’s that -- what are those two things over there? Oh, those are -- those are kiosks. I said, kiosks? Oh, yeah, he said, you know, you come in, you can place your order and then just go over there and pick up your -- our order. And, I said, well who -- you know, who mans that? He says, well, we’re not -- you know, we installed it as part of our modification, but we’re not quite using it yet. I said, well, when are you going to roll -- roll that out? He goes, oh, well, we’ll see how things are going, and he goes, and we’ll see what kind of policies you have up there in Hartford? I said, well, what do you mean policies? He said, well, minimum wage. He said, well, that’s gonna dictate kind of how, you know, we move forward.

Now, I haven’t been a politician for very long. I come from the more corporate culture, you know, and businesses, companies -- they create and develop every year financial models, right, of how they’re gonna run their company. Some of those financial models and business plans are one-year plans. Some
of those business plans, those financial models are five-year plans and some every ten-year plans, and when they look and see what’s going on here in Connecticut, even this very debate, there are businesses that are going to look at the result of this debate and if -- I like to remain hopeful -- in terms of if we aren’t able to stave off this legislation, those business plans -- those financial models are going to be adjusted in a way that minimizes Connecticut’s impact on those businesses. And, what does that mean for Connecticut? What that means is less job opportunities for Connecticut residents. That is what’s at stake.

You know, I want to raise wages for worker’s in Connecticut. I want to raise wages for all workers in Connecticut. The difference is that I just want to do that in a different way. I don’t believe that artificially increasing the minimum wage is going to do the trick because, again, here in our beloved State of Connecticut we continue to pass bad policies that are encouraging businesses to leave Connecticut, reducing job opportunities for people in Connecticut, encouraging individuals to leave Connecticut -- those that can. Many other folks spend a lot of their free time -- I’ve knocked on many doors. I go to many events throughout my district, and time and time again, I meet with individuals who are planning on, spend lots of time planning on how they can leave the state. It’s really because of the minimum wage. It’s because of the cost of living here, right. So, we can on one hand try to artificially increase wages, but then on the other hand, we’re raising the cost of living in Connecticut by tax increases. There’s a toll proposal out there now that makes it more expensive for people to get to work.
So, I go the opposite route. I say why don’t we work to make Connecticut more affordable for people? Why don’t we work towards making Connecticut more attractive or businesses to want to expand -- those that are here to want to expand their workforce, add more workers? I’d rather see a company expand and add a third to their workforce then us to increase their payroll by a third because that way we will have more people working. I strive to have more people working in Connecticut. I strive to have more people working in Connecticut, paying taxes in a sustainable kind of way.

When you look at our state in terms of government and running, one of our biggest -- some would argue our biggest problem is the fiscal financial health of our state. It’s anemic. Our growth compared to other states is extremely low, and study after study, publication after publication, there’s articles upon articles that talks about how Connecticut is so unfriendly to business. And, again, why is that important? Well, because we need businesses, whether, again, it’s a small 5-persons job or if it’s a 100-person company or a 10,000-person company. We need jobs here in Connecticut. This bill does nothing to help the strength of our economy. It only hurts our economy. I believe it actually hurts the very people that we’re trying to help because, again, there will be less job opportunities available. By artificially increasing the minimum wage, we continue to send a signal that we just don’t get it. As leaders of state policy, legislation to help make our state better, we need to show vision. We need to have vision, and the current visions that we are sending, that we are projecting is not a good one. I believe we need to stop repeating the same mistakes that we have made.
in the past. We need to stop looking at ways to artificially improve things here in Connecticut ‘cause it doesn’t work. It hasn’t been working. Folks thought that raising taxes would help our economy, help us get out of this financial crisis. We instituted income tax -- didn’t work. 2011, use tax increase -- that didn’t work. Another big tax increase in 2015, and now we’re looking at increasing the minimum wage, which is going to have a bad effect to our economy, which is going to result in less opportunities for people.

You know, my -- my parents when they came here in the late 60s, started off in minimum wage jobs. You know, I always look at America as far as the dream and examples. You know, you’re talking to an individual who grew up in inner city New Haven. My mother, my aunt when they came here, one of the first jobs that they were able to get, able to obtain was in the great town of Woodbridge. What did my mother do? She cleaned homes in Woodbridge, Connecticut. My aunt, a nanny for folks in Woodbridge. That’s in the late 60s and early 70s. To this day, that family where my aunt started off working with, the children that she helped raise -- and I said helped raise in Woodbridge still keep in communication with her to this day. It was said earlier that, you know, a manufacturer was booming much more in the 60s and 70s, and my father often bragged about how he would -- he often held two, sometimes three jobs at a time. He would brag at how he would work a job for a couple of weeks and a month, and if he didn’t like it, he would go out and find another job. He did that for a few years until he found a stable job that he liked in North Haven, American Cruise Boat -- no longer exists. My mother started off at very low pay. Education was always
her model. She went to community college, and she worked her way up. That’s the kind of vision I want for Connecticut. Opportunities for people. Not looking at ways to keep folks at the lower rung of the workforce in terms of pay. Look at ways to help people get started. Look for ways to help people to advance. Simply artificially increasing the minimum wage does not do that. I think it hurts far more than it helps. I want to increase everyone’s wages in this state with a healthy economy spending more time and effort finding ways to improve the lives of everyone living and working here in Connecticut.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Logan. Will you remark further? Senator Haskell.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH):

Good evening, Madam President. Good morning, I should say.

THE CHAIR:

Good morning. [Laughing].

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH):

I did not anticipate speaking tonight, and I confess that I was hesitant to support this legislation initially. I want to thank and commend Senator Kushner for her incredible work on this bill and also her willingness to listen and consider my thoughts on how this might impact the business community, and -- and engage in a conversation about how we can space these increases out in a way that
it’s -- it’s fair and doable for small business owners, but Madam President, I decided to rise because suddenly there have been portions of tonight’s debate in which we seem to be considering not how we should address economic inequality but whether or not we should address economic inequality. Whether inequality is something that we ought to be working together across the aisle to eliminate or at least reduce or whether it’s something that motivates people and is a tool for economic growth.

Madam President, I want to make sure that the record is absolutely clear. The economic research shows that inequality is bad for Connecticut. Whether you’re a minimum wage worker or not, you are harmed by this state’s unacceptably low wages. Connecticut is harmed when people -- when working families are held back. In 2014, the organization of economic cooperation and development found that rising inequality in the United States from 1990 to 2010 knocked about five percentage points off cumulative GDP over that period. The data shows that paying people a living wage improves physical and mental health and expands access to opportunities according to the study’s authors. In other words, putting more money into people’s pockets, lays the groundwork for a 21st century economy where business leaders may not have to come to this legislature, may not have to come and testify before the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. Might not have to pick up and leave Connecticut because they can’t find a skilled tech savvy workforce to fill the jobs that they desperately need filled in Connecticut. It’s not good for our state that a ten-minute drive on I-95 crosses a $100,000-dollar difference in median income. It holds us back.
And, it was said tonight, Madam President, that economic inequality can be helpful, and I will concede that in some cases that’s true. The World Bank in fact shows that inequality boosts economic growth, but that’s only in the case of developing countries where entrepreneurs are short on capital, but advanced economies like our own economic research is rarely unanimous that inequality has a negative impact on economic growth. That’s not to say, Madam President, that every single worker ought to earn the same salary. In fact, the International Monetary Fund found in 2017 that inequality could be beneficial to growth at low and moderate levels. I’m sure many of my colleagues are familiar with the GINI index, which helps to measure inequality. A zero on that scale means that everybody has the same income and a 100 on that scale means that one person in a society has all of the wealth. Now, inequality spurt growth in countries with GINI index values below 27. Unfortunately, for us, our national GINI index is somewhere around 41, and in Connecticut, it rises to almost 50. That’s well into the territory where inequality is no longer helpful but is in fact harmful. A study in the Journal of Science and Medicine concluded that economic inequality affects population health and well-being including domestic violence. A rise in inequality leads to more violence, more social costs, less education. It cannot be more clear that inequality is bad for our economy, not just morally but from the point of view of economic research and from the goal that I think we all share of lifting every household income of sparing consumers and revitalizing Connecticut’s job market.

The National Bureau of Economic Research tells us that wealth inequality has increased dramatically
since the 1980s with the top 1 percent share around 40 percent in 2016, versus only 25 percent to 30 percent in the 1980s. And, according to the Economic Policy Institute, Madam President, the minimum wage plays a key role in that story of the concentration of wealth among the top earners. I wish we didn’t have to go to $15 dollars over just 4-1/2 years. I wish we’d kept phase with steady increases over time, but our failure to adequately increase the minimum wage accounts for 48 percent of the increase in inequality between women at the middle and bottom wage distribution since 1979. The last report I’ll mention tonight is from the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, which shows that a $1 dollar increase in minimum wage will boost consumer spending per households with minimum wage workers by $2080 dollars per household. Connecticut needs those consumers. I’ll be voting yea tonight, not just to help put food on the table and gas in the car, not just to help parents afford pre-K and students afford college credits. I’ll be voting yea because our economy needs more consumers who are empowered by an economic freedom that benefits us all. Our economy needs educated skilled workers, and we can all benefit, Madam President, from an increase in the minimum wage because when that wage is increased, inequality goes down and economic growth goes up.

Thank you very much, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Haskell. Will you remark further? Senator Champagne. Good morning.

SENATOR CHAMPAGNE (35TH):
Good morning, Madam President. Thank you. It’s funny -- when I listened to some of the last speakers and we talk about low earner, low economics. When in this Chamber this week, we took some of the poorest people in Connecticut that live in nursing homes that had to give up all of their money to stay in that nursing home, who make $60 dollars -- $60 dollars a month, and those same people who keep shining the light over here this side of the aisle voted down a $12 dollar a month increase. That’s quite funny listening to this tonight, but you know, when we look at the minimum wage increase, there’s three factors that we must consider -- the size of the increase, the length of time that we implement that increase, and third -- and I think the most important -- the economic conditions and the location of the proposed increase. The economic conditions and the location of the proposed increase. That location is the State of Connecticut.

Let’s take a look at Connecticut. We all sit around this circle. Everything I’m gonna tell ya is the same thing we all know about the economic condition of Connecticut. Right after I put my glasses on. Over the last couple of years, we keep having policies that affect everything around us in the State of Connecticut. Can we afford an increase in the minimum wage? Connecticut hasn’t recovered from the recession. Job losses in the first quarter of this year were more than 3400. We’re going in the wrong direction. All indications point that we’re going to have a very large tax increase over the next two years. Why? Because we haven’t fixed the problem. We continue to add more and more tax increases, and at the end of these two years if the problem isn’t fixed, we’re gonna end up in the same
place with another tax increase. No legislation came out of Committee that will change those never-ending tax increases. Fixed costs continue to rise at alarming rates, and both continue to come out of the legislature adding to the fixed costs in the form of never-ending lavish raises. The cost of living in Connecticut is very high. It’s above other -- other states right now. In fact, when we look around the country, the rest of the country is flourishing well above what we are doing here in Connecticut.

What about the business climate in Connecticut? Currently, Connecticut continues to raise taxes and fees on businesses and some of those taxes and fees are the highest in the nation. Connecticut has some of the most burdensome regulations on our businesses making it more difficult to even operate. In some cases, more costly than the state next door. That’s why we continue to lose businesses.

Let’s look at the municipalities. Municipalities continue to see unfunded mandates handed down to them from the state. State funds to the municipalities are being reduced. The teachers’ pension, which has been mishandled by the state is being passed off to the municipalities, and reductions in the UCS funding.

This minimum wage on municipalities is going to cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. In my town alone by the end of this increase, it’s gonna be over half a million dollars. In the town next door to me, over $300,000 dollars. They’re dealing with crumbling foundations. The large reductions in UCS. It’s a serious problem, but this points to what’s going on in Connecticut. With our businesses in
trouble, our municipalities struggling, do I think Connecticut is in a good position to raise the minimum wage? No. I don’t think we are. I think in fact listening to the businesses that I’ve heard from and very surprisingly, I haven’t heard -- I know all the republicans have heard from many, many businesses, and I’m very surprised I haven’t heard that nobody else has, which is very surprising. So, I’ve heard from small businesses in Vernon, Ellington, Ashford, Stafford, Woodstock, and two outside of my district, Manchester and South Windsor, and it’s the same thing. The cost will result in the loss of jobs. The biggest expense right now for any business is labor, and every time you increase labor, you’re increasing the biggest part of the cost.

One owner of multiple small businesses stated, “My employees do not want the increase because the last time the minimum wage went up each store lost an employee, and they fear they could lose their jobs.” That’s an interesting point. I wouldn’t want to be standing in a location and fearing for my job, especially when you can order things online much easier. We’re watching as our big stores are closing across Connecticut, and every time that happens jobs go away. Is it going to be cheaper to raise the minimum wage to a point where it passes the tipping point and it’s going to be cheaper for the business to close and do things online?

Another business owner said, “The profit margin for my stores is very low, and I cannot operate my business and make a profit starting with the first increase scheduled in 2019.” And, I know this was sent out to multiple people, but she talked about her profit margin was 10 percent. She has a child
in college. She has a roof that leaks, and other problems within the house. She’s not a rich business owner that keeps being portrayed here. She’s a struggling small business owner.

One of the manufacturing companies in my district took the offer from New Hampshire, and they’re moving. In fact, I saw two other medium-sized companies close since the election. I guess one of the questions is can the State of Connecticut afford to lose many more businesses? Just in the Hartford Courant, we just heard about another company from -- who’s headquartered in Connecticut, who’s opening another manufacturing plant in Texas, not in Connecticut. Connecticut cannot afford to lose these businesses. We can’t lose the tax money for both the state and the municipality. Now is definitely not the time to raise the minimum wage. Do I think we need to look at this and make sure we’re not hurting people? Yeah.

I was going to end it right about there, but as I was typing this, I received a forwarded post that originated from a Representative from across the aisle who’s in my district. The post states borrowing for economic development, low-SEP, and federal funding are in grave danger because of other borrowing that’s going to take place. It says the governor, Ed Lamont, put the state on a debt diet, but I do not believe this will cost -- this will cause the loss of federal funding, and I believe low-SEP and economic development are priorities for both sides of the aisle. I’m hoping that this was no more than a stretch of the truth or a political ploy, rather than something that is not being communicated about these programs to my side of the aisle. The federal funds are in danger because of
the state borrowing. I believe our federal
delegation we quickly notify state officials
printing false information about the loss of federal
funds, which would drastically affect our state
budget is wrong, and it can affect the trust in this
building. I brought that up because if that was
true all the budget talks we’ve been doing would
have to stop. Yet, what did we do? We sent this
out telling people you’re going to lose federal
funding. How do you lose federal funding from
borrowing state money? I don’t understand that.
but if we are -- if we are losing money, this would
be another reason not to put more burden on the
State of Connecticut or our businesses. Do I think
everything should have a livable wage? Well, I call
livable wage -- I don’t think this gets us to it --
but a wage increase? Yeah. But it shouldn’t -- we
keep calling it a fair wage. There’s different
jobs, and people get paid for different jobs.
Sitting around this circle, we have some very
wealthy people. Should they make the same as
somebody not wealthy that’s doing a different job?
No. You should get paid a fair wage for the job
that you do, and there’s always an opportunity for
people to move -- move up, and that’s what we should
be doing more than anything -- helping them.
Helping them go to school. Helping them find a way
to better themselves. I think that’s the better
thing to do here.

I’m going to end it here. It’s getting early in the
morning, but if we do this, I have a feeling that we
will be back to fix things because I have a feeling
that we are going to have to correct it because
we’re going to be looking at businesses leaving
Connecticut.
Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Champagne. Will you remark further? Senator Maroney.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH):

Good morning, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Good morning.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH):

I rise in support of this bill. I want to thank my colleagues for the discussion tonight and sharing, you know, both the positives and some of their concerns about this bill, and I must admit that initially I did share some of those concerns. Like some of my other colleagues, I own a small business. Many of my friends own small businesses or work in small businesses, and one of the things that we’ve heard tonight and I’ve heard from other friends is that I believe this will cost us jobs. I believe we may lose jobs, but it’s important for me not to just believe but to look at research, especially since we heard earlier tonight someone ask was there any science base used to determine this -- this wage? And, since I was not involved directly in crafting this legislation, I can’t speak to whether or not science was used to arrive at the $15 dollar an hour figure, so I wanted to look myself at the research to see what would research support and what would research bear? Many countries set their minimum wage at 50 percent of the median income. In fact, the United States has the third lowest minimum wage
of any of the developed countries. Across the United States, the national minimum wage is 38 percent of the median income. Our high point was in 1968 when we hit 55 percent of the median income. Research shows that the median wage should be somewhere in-between 50 and 60 percent of the median income for the area. In the state of Connecticut, the median income is at $22.60 an hour, and it should be noted that was our median income as of May 2018. We don’t know what it is now, but we can anticipate since the cost of living is 2.7 percent, it is higher than that. Data or research by -- and I apologize. I’ll probably say his wrong name, but Aaron Degidubic [phonetic] PhD from the University of Massachusetts -- he has said that above that 60 percent threshold there is a concern that if you raise the minimum wage above 60 percent it could cost jobs or it could cost the loss of jobs, so at 60 percent of the median income in Connecticut right now, that would be $13.56. If we look at raising the minimum wage, the median wage were to raise by the cost of living or at least what the cost of living has been determined for Social Security, which is 2.7 percent, in four years, it would be at $15.08. So, we will not exceed that -- that number where we’re at risk of causing jobs.

And, it should be noted that our median wage is actually higher than that because we don’t know what it is as of this year. That was as of last year. So, in the 4-1/2 years, when we get to $15 dollars an hour, the median income in our state will be much higher, will be able to support that.

Another thing that’s important in looking at research is what are the other affects? What are the other impacts of raising the minimum wage?
Research has shown and what many of us would seem to make sense that it will lift people out of poverty, but it’s not just when you raise the minimum wage. Their wages accelerate after that, and so they will continue to grow their incomes, spend more, and our economy will grow. Some other things that you may not expect from research are that raising the minimum wage leads to a reduction in smoking and other increases in public health, which again will help reduce costs to the state, help reduce our healthcare costs for the state. Research at Rutgers has shown that a higher minimum wage will reduce recidivism and reduce property crimes, again, saving the state money. This policy has been shown to produce broad social, positive social outcomes, but one of the things that’s important to remember when we talk about raising the minimum wage is that it’s not about facts, and it’s not about figures, it’s about people.

And, this was really brought home to me last Thursday when I had my coffee and conversation and I went into a diner that I’ve been going to only since I started campaigning. It’s in a different town than where I live, and I went in and I saw Gloria, and I said, “Hey, good morning, Gloria. How are you doing?” And, I said, “Well, I’m going to be honest, I’m much better than the people in the House are doing. They’re still in there debating minimum wage right now.” And, she said, “Oh, well, I’m not getting a raise. You know, everyone else is getting a raise, but I’m not getting a raise. I’ve been working here for 30 years, and this won’t -- this won’t help me.” And, that really hit home that there are people who are looking at this as I will get a raise. This will help me to provide for my
family. This will help me to provide a better education and a better future for my children.

And, that’s why while I, you know, share some people’s reservations initially, I am in support of this measure, and I thank Senator Kushner for her work on this and for her flexibility in moving this out, and so that we are now within what data will support.

So, thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Maroney. Will you remark further? Senator Martin. Good morning, sir.

SENATOR MARTIN (31ST):

Good morning, Madam President. Madam President, there is two baseball players -- professional baseball players sitting on the bench, and they’re wondering is there baseball in heaven? So, this debate went on and on and on, and they decided eventually that whoever passed away first would come back and tell the other person if there was baseball in heaven. So, they finished their baseball careers, both of them actually ended up in the hall of fame, and the first one passes away, and as promised, comes back and tells his friend whether or not there was baseball in heaven, and he says to him, I have some good news and I have some bad news. The good news is there is baseball in heaven and the bad news, you’re scheduled to pitch next Thursday. No? [Laughing]. It is quarter to one in the morning. I thought I’d change it up a little bit. [Laughing]. Thank you, Julie, for laughing. [Laughter]. All right. I thought I’d like to
change it up a little bit anyway. I could have stood up and said I was gonna support this bill. That could have gotten a laugh perhaps, but nonetheless, listen.

You know, we’ve heard a lot of statistics tonight, and I’m just going to share just a few. They do -- what I have here it comes from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and -- and it says that less than 5 percent of the labor force are actually earning minimum wage, and half of the minimum wage earners are under the age of 25, and many of those are teenagers and are in entry-level positions, and actually living with their parents. Further two-thirds of the minimum wage earners got a raise between -- within their first year of employment, so I -- that’s sort of the point of view that I come from. I know it’s a little bit different than others here in the circle who talk about a living wage or a fair wage, and fair enough. You know, it’s just a different point of view.

So, like others, I’ve heard from many in my district -- businesses and constituents. One that I heard from was a Dunkin’ Donut franchisee who actually she owns one or two, but the franchise as a whole employs about 10,000 people here in the state of Connecticut. I also heard from the general manager of Lake Compounce in Bristol. I heard from an executive from 99 restaurant who stated that the increase in minimum wage would -- would cost the company $1.8 million dollars. I heard from a few small restaurant operators, and electrician, constituents, and actually, I also heard from a mother who was concerned about the impact of the daycare and what that might cost her. She says that daycare was already expensive, and she pays between
$250 to $350 dollars a week, and with a minimum wage increase that it would make it pretty hard for her, especially being a single working mom.

So, hearing from employers, being an employer, being raised in a construction family, self-employed, you know, I asked how do or how will employees -- or employers offset a wage hike that’s being proposed here? And, the employers -- and actually, I read -- this came from the Hartford Business Journal. They did a survey I think through CBIA, and they said that the response was -- was as follows, that they would cut workforce levels, they would cut hours or benefits in order to do what they needed to do, they would increase the use of automation to replace workers, and I don’t know about a month ago I happened to be in Glastonbury, I was hungry, I needed something fast, and I hadn’t been in McDonald’s in four or five years, and I walked into McDonald’s, and I saw four kiosks, and that’s how I placed my order. I had never saw that before. I just hadn’t seen it, you know, but I had seen it in Home Depot, you know, and ShopRite or Price Shopper. And, also, you know -- and I talk about automation now. So, I’m having dinner with a friend who had recently retired. He was a consultant for a pretty large food distributor here in Connecticut, and we are talking about minimum wage, and this was three or four months ago, and he -- he was telling me about the price point, about you know they already know at a certain level that when we get to “X” amount, we are going to be automating our warehouse, and minimum wage just basically increases obviously the level -- entry-level jobs, but also -- also increases those that are above them and sort of presses the numbers -- so to speak -- to make certain decisions. So, my prediction is that with
this bill and with its pretty aggressive, I’ll say, rate increases through the next three or four years that we’re going to be -- we’re gonna see automation probably exponentially advance in robotics along with electronic replacements for an array of jobs such as retail clerks, which we’ve already seen that, waitstaff perhaps, custodial work. We’re seeing some of that and warehousing jobs, and some will probably totally -- totally surprise us. some of you maybe remember the Jetson’s while we were growing up. Another thing that will probably happen is we will see unfunded -- the result of this increase will be sort of a mandate on ourselves as a state. We saw that or read that in the bill in the fiscal note, also on our cities and our towns, and wage compression as I said will put demands by the employees from the rest of the company that work for a company who are earning currently higher wages, but once those wages kick in from minimum wage, they are going to want a rate increase as well.

So, I guess my concern is -- and I come at it from a business perspective -- there are marginal companies out there that just they week-to-week like family households. Some of them are living week-to-week, payroll-to-payroll, and having run a small business. I understand the challenges and the struggles and making that weekly payroll is sometimes difficult, and I just pretty sure, pretty confident that once this minimum wage is implemented that we are going to see some of those marginal companies close their doors and thus having layoffs, but companies do lead the way. They do lead the way for economic -- economic activity in our communities and in our state.
And, I just tell you a little story, I guess. I’m from Bristol, and we have our vacant downtown Bristol 17 acres, and now it’s starting to get developed a bit, and there is some -- some growth taking place there, but we had a developer a couple years back that came in, and he wanted to -- he had an option on a whole piece of property, and he wanted to develop it, and so he did a great market research and presented it to the town or to the city, and he wanted to bring in some housing, but he also wanted to bring in some commercial, and it really came down to we all knew that gee does -- businesses were not coming into downtown Bristol, and he was talking about foot traffic and that we needed to have that, but we also needed housing in order to have that.

But the businesses won’t come unless the housing, but the housing necessarily wouldn’t come either without the businesses, so sort of what came first the chicken or the egg. So, the developer eventually went away, but if you look at the history of Bristol, and I’m sure a lot of the communities and larger cities, you will see it was the jobs or the manufacturers that came into the towns, and then we had housing develop around those jobs, around those -- those companies, and the community flourished because of those companies and those jobs, so I guess that’s perhaps why I’m a little bit more sensitive to on the business side because of my upbringing but also having this understanding of it that cities evolve because of the jobs and the products that were produced from those -- those companies. You heard earlier tonight about the -- the importance of creating some policies here in this building, and those policies should be geared to attracting companies.
The -- I talked a bit about the mindset tonight. You know, about -- you know, I see it. I see the minimum wage as an entry-level job, and some here believe that it is a -- a living or a fair wage job. We also heard a little bit about a dignity wage as well regarding something that we felt last night that should have been passed but didn’t get passed.

But I’ll say this -- what I see here tonight is a i -- I felt that we were doing a little soul sharing with one another. We heard some great stories, some wonderful stories, real life stories. You know, we shared our thoughts and beliefs, and I thought it was pretty healthy actually. I felt that we are -- there was a start perhaps of a little bit of a connection with each other. My hope is that maybe that we can, you know, maybe -- maybe we can find some common ground. You know, maybe the minimum wage is not $10.10 like it is now. Maybe it is $11 dollars, maybe it is $12 dollars, I don’t know. Maybe we should have passed that $12 dollars for a month for the elderly last night, but the point is I -- what I’m sort of trying to get across here is I thought this was very extremely healthy tonight, and I think that I’m going to leave you on this note that Senator Formica said something that I thought was appropriate here, that you know let’s find a way really to start talking to one another, and maybe out of that, we will find the solution that we all desperately are looking for, and that is to make this a better state that we all live in here.

So, thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you so much, Senator Martin. Will you remark further? Senator Bergstein. Good morning.
SENATOR BERGSTEIN (36TH):

[Chuckle] Good morning. Thank you, Madam President. I will keep my remarks brief. And, while I appreciate the many anecdotes that have been shared tonight, I prefer to make public policy based on evidence rather than anecdotes. And, I rise in support of this bill because I am deeply concerned about the impact on women. We’re living in a strange and dangerous time when we see an assault on women’s rights almost daily happening in other states, but we are not immune, and minimum wage is a question of women’s rights because this is one more barrier for women to achieve economic security and independence. One more barrier that’s no so different from the barriers we see other states enacting, laws that push women backward rendering them powerless and poor. So, I’d like to share with you a few more datapoints. We know already that women are disproportionately harmed by the lack of a minimum wage. If we pass this law, 50 percent of women in Connecticut living in poverty will rise out of poverty. That would be an amazing achievement, and as my good colleague, Senator Anwar, eloquently stated, this is a moral question and a question of women’s rights. The economic benefits are also clear because when women earn a living wage, they spend their excess money on the right things. They spend it on more nutritious food for their families, better education for their children, better healthcare. They invest in their communities, and everyone benefits. They lead healthier more productive lives. Their kids do better in school our economy grows because lifting women and their children out of poverty saves taxpayer dollars by preventing the social costs that stem from poverty. This is not speculation. This is evidenced-based
McKenzie has done extensive research and proven over and over again that gender-equal policies grow the economy. They’ve even quantified that growth. If we had gender-equal policies, our economy, our GDP would grow by $2.1 trillion dollars in under ten years. That would be astounding, and it’s absolutely achievable. A livable minimum wage is key to achieving both economic independence for women and economic growth for our state and country.

So, I stand in support of this bill because I believe every person who works full time deserves dignity and security. They deserve decent food and housing, not living in homeless shelters or relying on government assistance like Miriam Rodriguez who was cited earlier and so many others. I support this bill because I am particularly concerned about the harm to women, and I want to eliminate every barrier for women. I know that a livable wage is not only the right thing to do but also smart economic policy, and it is one step forward to achieving gender equality.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you so much, Senator Bergstein. Will you remark further? Senator Bizzarro. Good morning, sir.

SENATOR BIZZARRO (6TH):

Good morning, and happy Friday, Madam President. Madam President, life is all about perspective. I am very found of saying that. I am fascinated by
how the human brain perceives things. Different people might look at the same thing, and yet, perceive that same exact thing in different ways. Madam President, I didn’t prepare a speech tonight. I think people are probably happy to hear that. This is not one of these bills that has a bunch of different sections that fit together somehow like a puzzle. I have an analytical mind. I’m good at looking at things like that and talking about it. It comes with ease. No. This is a different kind of bill here, so I’m just going to talk a little bit about perspective. We’re all looking at the same thing as a group of us that think that this legislation is going to help a certain class of people, and there’s another group of us that thinks that the opposite is true, that in fact this is going to harm the very people that it reports to help -- perspective, Madam President.

Several hours ago I sat here and I listened intently to the distinguished Senator from the 10th District as he delivered what were incredibly compelling and passionate remarks about his childhood, and as he spoke, I could smell that elevator, I could see those bodies that you’d have to step over, climb over to get into your apartment, I could hear the voices of the drug dealers on the fire escape a couple of feet away from little children sleeping in their beds at night, I could feel the bone chilling cold in the apartment in the wintertime and the stifling heat of that studio apartment in the Bronx where four people slept on a twin bed and a pullout couch for 15 -- 12 years. Madam President, my parents saved their whole life to buy their first home and move my family from the Bronx to the great city of New Britain. They did that because -- well,
again, life is all about perspective and New Britain might as well have been Beverly Hills.

Unfortunately, my father not having any particular skillset, struggling with the language, no education to speak of couldn’t find a job, so for 15 years, he got up every morning -- every Monday morning at 4 a.m., commuted down to the Bronx where he worked as a laborer, had a good union job, worked all week, was away from his family, drove home every Friday night, repeated that process for 15 years, put a tremendous amount of strain on my family. And, I prayed. I remember being a kid and praying every night, Madam President, but I didn’t pray that my father would get a raise or -- what I prayed for was that somehow he would find a job in New Britain so that he could be with us.

Now, I heard the good Senator from the 29th a few hours ago quoting one of our colleagues in the House, saying that one of the problems we have in this building is that there aren’t enough people here who know what it’s like to be on their last few dollars. No, Madam President, I don’t think that’s the case at all. I’ve spent hours now listening to all of my colleagues and friends around this circle. I think there are plenty of people here in this building who understand what it means to struggle. I would respectfully submit that the problem is that there aren’t enough people in this building who understand what it means to have to make payroll. That’s the problem, Madam President. This is going to be very difficult for some people to hear, and some people are not going to want to understand this, but regrettably, there is only one perspective that matters in this debate. It is the perspective of the business community in this state. The
businesses of the State of Connecticut are screaming at us at the top of their lungs, and we are not listening. We are not hearing them. And, I know it hurts to believe that that’s true, but that’s the only perspective that matters. Why? Well, because unless we have another piece of legislation that’s coming before us that is going to begin to mandate that employers hire and retain employees, then we have no control over this. What are we going to do when we have wage compression and the employer who might otherwise give an employee a raise or might have a manager who is eligible for a promotion, says I can’t afford this?

We talk about living wage. Yes. I agree it’s impossible to live in this state on $10.10 an hour. It’s equally impossible to live on $15 dollars an hour. It’s all about jobs, Madam President. We have to figure out a way to create more jobs, to incentivize businesses to create good paying jobs. We’re not doing that with this legislation. Is the state going to expand hiring? Are we going to hire all of the people who are going to be looking for a job because the opportunities aren’t going to be there? I mean I’m a -- I’m an employer. I have a very small business. I employ several individuals. This summer I’m so proud to say that I’m going to have an intern through the local -- my local OIC Summer Youth Employment Program. I’m excited about it, and I had already committed to another intern for the summer. I’ve got to pay both of them. I want to be able to do these things, but I just can’t afford to do it. I don’t know where we’re going, Madam President, but I don’t like the direction.

We’ve heard from several of my colleagues about the impact that this is going to have on municipalities.
We want to help employees. We want to help people to be able to pay their bills. Well, what are we doing? We’re going to give them a wage increase, and then we’re gonna turn around and we’re gonna make sure that there’s a tax increase so if they -- their family owns a property in a municipality, their property taxes are going to go up, and if they’re renting their rent is going to go up because the property owner’s taxes are going up. I mean in New Britain -- in my city of New Britain, Parks and Rec Department alone believes that this bill is going to cost $400,000 dollars a year in increased costs -- $400,000 dollars a year passed on to the taxpayers of a cash-strapped municipality. What are we doing, Madam President? We are not paying attention. We’re not listening to the business community in this state. We are ignoring the municipalities as they beg and plead for help. It’s all about perspective, Madam President. I hope I’m wrong, but at the end of the day, as I said, unless we’re willing to mandate that employers begin to hire and retain people, and I don’t know -- the way things are going maybe some day in the near future that won’t sound as far-fetched as it does tonight.

I oppose this legislation for all of these reasons, Madam President. Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR:


SENATOR MOORE (22ND):

Good morning, Madam President. First of all, Madam President, I want to say thank you to Senator
Kushner for the work she’s done on this bill and the fabulous job of Robyn Porter -- Representative Porter. You know, I was having a déjà vu moment a while ago, and it wasn’t really a pleasant one. In my first year, I stood here and fought for $15-dollar wage. It was a fight for $15 dollars, looking at companies like Walmart who makes billions of dollars profit on the back of the working poor, and we pay for it, and nobody talks about that. that we subsidize childcare living through Section 8. We pay for their healthcare. We give them SNAP benefits while they continue to make billions of dollars, and nobody talks about that.

You know, I’ve heard the stories of people struggling and what it took for them to get to where they are. I heard someone refer to 400 years ago. It seemed that it was a good time for them, but for a lot of us, it wasn’t. I heard someone mention 1954. Whether you know it or not, that’s the floor of the Civil Rights Act that took place, and the opportunities that those people had, other people did not have. So, when you talk about putting things into perspective, let’s put it all into perspective of where we are and where we’ve come from and how some other people have struggled more than others.

When I ran the first time for my seat, I pledged to people who are low-income workers that I would fight for them. I’m keeping my word by voting for this bill tonight. I also took a job at Target because I was the Chair of Human Services, and people would come before me and tell these horrible stories of how they were working more than two jobs and they had children at home, and my thought was who’s taking care of the children? There’s an African
proverb that says, “How are the children?” That is the question that you ask, and if you say, the children are well. The community is well. Well, when I think about the number of people who are working two jobs, making less than $10 dollars an hour when I got here, and I at that time there was an argument over the $10.10 minimum wage, and I said, “Well, when is it ever gonna take place?” You know, I’ve been fortunate enough to come up through the telephone company and make good wages, and I always thought that everybody else was making those same type of wages until I got into a human service position to hear what people were going through, and I really didn’t believe it. I just couldn’t imagine how someone could go to work to two jobs and be paid under $9 dollars an hour. And, so when I took that job at Target I talked to some of the people who were working there also, and I told them I was trying to fight for $15 dollars as a wage, and you know, nobody believed it. They didn’t think it could happen, and you know what? It’s been five years. I’ve always believed it could happen. And, you know, I just want to put this in perspective also when people start to talk about what it is going to cost an employer. We’re not talking about jumping to the $15 dollars over night. It’s over the four years, so it’s $1 dollar. One dollar when you’re working 40 hours a week, when you come home is $30 dollars. You know what $30 dollars buys these days? Five gallons of milk and five loaves of bread, and when you’re low income, that money’s not making it to the bank. You’re gonna buy food. I heard Representative Bergstein talk about health. We pay for it in the long run. When we have people working long hours, they become ill. The children are not being taken care of. No one’s managing the
children. No one’s mentoring the children. There’s long-term results -- negative results when we don’t treat people the way they should be treated.

You know, I could say -- there’s a book by Bebe Campbell Moore, Your Blues is not Like My Blues, and I could play that card in here and talk about what it’s like for me to stand here and be fighting for this $15 dollars, but I don’t need to tell you my story. There’s people sitting up here in the gallery that live it every single day. It’s not a story. It’s their lives. It’s their lives, and they want to work. They want to go to work every day. They want to be paid just like everybody else. They want a living wage, and they deserve it, and so when people argue that you know these businesses gonna leave. I say what would you do if these people leave Connecticut and go someplace else where they’re gonna get a better wage? Let’s split the script and find out what it would be like if they weren’t here to do these jobs. So, you know, I thought about Walmart and how much money they’re making, and when I looked at their 1.5 million employees in the United States, and they have an operating income of $21 billion dollars, why am I paying, why am I subsidizing for this -- for the people who work there? Why? They should be paying it themselves, and they should be paying their workers a decent wage. I’m not talking about people at Walmart who are making $15 dollars an hour. There are still people there making $10.10, and if they weren’t making that $10.10 because of what Governor Malloy did, they would still be making under $10 dollars an hour. It seems like the more people -- the more money people have they just want to have more. They’re not thinking about investing
back into people, and that’s how they get to have billions of dollars.

So, you know, I think about -- people have talked about automation. So, I was in Walmart -- not Walmart -- I was in Target. I never go inside Walmart. I was in Target, and there was one person ringing people out and everything else had the one that you swipe through. I refuse to use that. I go through one where people are working, and I heard people in the line complaining about how many people were in line, and there might have been 10 to 12 people waiting with one cashier, and the people refused to go through the line. Yeah, automation is coming no matter what we do, and I don’t think we should be blaming it on $15 dollars or the wage increase. It is just the way of the world and the world is changing, but just as we’re going to be automated, other jobs are going to come. The world is not going to be the world that we know now. The world that I know right now for many reasons in the way of business is not the world that I lived in when I was young. My father was born in 1889. He fought in World War I. He made his way from Oklahoma to Connecticut, and I imagine what that traveling was like, and when I listen to the stories of people who tell me how hard it was for them when they came here from another country and I think of -- about my father as a black man who ended up owning three properties because he worked hard, but he also had people who worked for him, and he always paid them a fair wage, and he always said as long as we have enough to eat and we can pay our bills, there is no need for us not to pay the people who work for us any less.
I just want to remind you that we have people that we’re talking about. That people elected us, and we are here to represent the people whether they are a business or whether they are a small business, large business, or whether the people that go to work that service every single day. It’s about the people, and when we start talking about profit all over people and we keep saying it’s not the time, I do want to ask you when is the right time? It’s five years later. I think I could be arguing that $10.10 right now. I’ve not heard anybody talk about the difference that that could make in someone’s life every single day and why we must do this today. Because you know what? It’s the right thing to do. I’ve heard people give really great statistics, but I’ve always come to a place of people. I am -- I do not have a PhD in economics, but I do know what it cost to go to the grocery store, and I have nobody to feed in my house except for me, and when I walk by that meat counter, I wonder how do families feed their families? How do they give them anything nutritious? We talk about health. We invest in health, but you know what, if they can’t afford to buy the food because food is so high -- I was with the dairy people today, and they talked about the terrorist in China and what it’s gonna do to their exports when they send their -- their goods overseas and the large percentage that goes overseas. Is anybody thinking about what it’s gonna cost for people to buy milk and dairy here in the U.S. and how are those people gonna afford it?

It’s time. The time is right now, and I, again, want to thank you. I appreciate the comments that people have said. I -- I understand people have passion and they have their own beliefs, but sometimes, people should think through some of the
things they’re saying and put it in perspective that some people have not had the same opportunities as others.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Will you remark further? Senator Somers. Good morning.

SENATOR SOMERS (18TH):

Good morning. I hope you’re feeling as refreshed as most of us are. Thank you for your stamina up there. It’s been a long week for you. Well, I rise this morning with some thoughts on this bill that I would like to share, and one of the first things that I would like to say is I wish that we were talking about a maximum wage, not a minimum wage here in the state of Connecticut. The minimum wage for me in my perspective has always been the entrée into the market. It has not ever meant to be supporting a family. That would be a living wage. That is not what is in this bill. It says minimum wage, and if we want to have that conversation, that’s a conversation I think we should have at another time. When we talk about the maximum wage and rising people up so they can be earning more money and having a better life here in the state of Connecticut, I think we need to talk about how we can help those and educate them and give them the skills they need so they don’t stay at a minimum wage job, which is what it was never intended for.

So, if we look back, Connecticut’s economy -- it’s stagnant right now, and I know that all my colleagues in the Chamber from listening to the
debate tonight we all have the idea of trying to help those who are in a position of being perhaps an unskilled laborer or someone who is entering the market or working at a minimum wage job. I think we all want to help people be able to better themselves and get out of that particular wage group and rise up. I think everyone in here has that in mind, but I think we have different methods to get there. I think that we need to work on changing the landscape that we have here in Connecticut and ignite our economy, which has become a place that is not positive. When you look at how other states are doing compared to Connecticut, it’s quite -- quite scary. We rank amongst the worst economy in the United States for the past six years. While the rest of the economy is booming, Connecticut’s economy shrunk. We shrunk. That is not a good sign for Connecticut, so we need to change that, and that -- by changing that, that provides opportunities for those who are entering into the market for those to become more skilled and for wages to increase. It also shows me that we have had a legislature for years that has not understood the private sector and how the private sector works. We are not a state or a nation that tells corporations what their CEOs can make, what their CEOs can’t make, and what they have to pay their people. That’s just not who we are as a nation. I don’t think what’s right -- if the good Senator Moore is accurate in her depiction of what Walmart executives are making and not paying their people, I think that’s wrong personally, but I can’t make them change who they are. What I can do is provide opportunity so people don’t have to choose to work there. That’s the way I look at it.

There’s been many things said about businesses here tonight, about employers, about what they can do,
what they can’t do, what they can absorb, what they can afford, and rest assured I’ve been a business owner. I’ve started my own company. I’ve had a manufacturing company here in Connecticut for over 25 years, and when you look at somebody’s fails like what I’ve heard tonight -- oh, this company makes $90 million dollars in sales. That does not mean that company is profitable. It means that what their sales are. There are many large companies that are not profitable, and there’s many small companies that have low sales but they’re very profitable. So, don’t let the sales number fool you.

So, I want to give you a little bit of background. I am a woman who has earned minimum wage. My first job was working as a Chambermaid in Mystic, going up and down four flights of fire escape stairways, changing linens and beds, and then at the end of the day doing laundry in the basement. That job taught me three things. Number one, I don’t want to stay in a job that pays minimum wage. Number two, I’m gonna do whatever I can to get an education so I don’t have to stay in that job, and number three, I’ve got to save half my paycheck. Those are the things that taught me. I went on. In worked for a large defense contractor. I worked in the medical world developing products, and then I started my own biotech company. When we started our own biotech company, small businesses -- it was myself and two partners. We didn’t have a lot of money. We struggled, but we needed employees, so we hired people and at that time 25 years ago, I would bet -- I can’t remember -- but we probably started people at minimum wage, but we hired women, and we hired women that had been left in halfway houses that came out of prison with ankle braces because we believed
in second chances. As a small business, you don’t have normally a lot of disposable income to be spending on lavish salaries, so you struggled. There were times for years I worked a second job as a waitress and a bartender, so I actually had income coming in because I was paying my employees, but myself and my partners were not drawing a salary, and we did that for years. And, when we grew, we were able to pay our employees more, and I’m proud to say that company is still here in Connecticut, and we still have the same employees that we had on day one because we were a small company and as we grew, our workforce grew. We were able to expand and provide opportunities for women that had no opportunities, and there are hundreds of companies like the one that I’m describing. Not every business is a bad guy. Businesses -- small businesses are the ones that are going to be affected most intimately by this legislative change. They do not have the big corporate structure to be able to absorb this kind of an increase this quickly. They just don’t.

I truly believe that this speed of the implementation of this increase will hurt the very people that we’re trying to help. Because what happens when a business like a small business gets this kind of increase -- we’re looking at a 48 percent increase -- so quickly, they have opportunities -- their opportunities -- excuse me. Sorry. It’s late -- are really dried up, so they have to respond. Not every one of them can just raise their price on their product to cover the cost of the raised minimum wage. What they have to do is constrict and when they do that, that means part time, no opportunities for new jobs, and it also means in time layoffs.
So, I want to share with you a few companies that I’ve spoken to. I’ve talked to many, but these are just a few I think will highlight it, and again, these are not the Walmarts of the world. These are not the Targets of the world. These are small businesses here in Connecticut that are struggling to stay here because of years of regulations, taxation making it very difficult to stay here, and now we’re gonna put this on top of it in a very compressed timeframe.

Two of them are companies in my district. They’re independent small grocery stores. They’re not the big Stop and Shops, and they have told me that the increase in the minimum wage will be more than they make in profit for the year, so their options are to lay people off, which they don’t want to do because it’s almost like a family situation. They will push people to part time. They will have -- they’re not even in a position to automate like Stop and Shop has that guy that goes up and down that cleans up the spills, which is kind of creepy, but they don’t have enough money to do that, but then their last -- their full-time employees going to part-time, and when you calculate the difference, they will lose $100 dollars a week by the change. That’s not what we want. We want to rise people up. We don’t want to compress their salaries, but they will have no alternative because they’re small, because they’re independent they do not have the ability to just raise their grocery prices. They’re competing with these big companies like Stop and Shop who have these massive buying powers, which they don’t, so they have to keep their prices competitive with their big Stop and Shop, right. That means they have to take the cost somewhere else.
Another company in Mystic. They will be on the cover of Yankee magazine this summer for the best of New England -- their big summer issue. Mystic Knotwork. This is a super unique company. He hires only women. They make handmade knotted items -- doormats, coasters. They’re made out of hemp. They’re awesome. He lets people take the pieces home and they do them at home so they don’t have to pay for daycare. He has a fantastic model. He cannot absorb this. He lives on a boat because he can’t afford a house. He will move his business.

Somebody who is on the cover of Yankee magazine. He has sent me email after email to implore us that if we’re gonna do this do not do it at this rate. Spread it out so they can absorb the change.

What are we going to do about our nonprofits? Has anybody talked about that? Our nursing homes. I’m sure you have all heard from them ‘cause I have. Our nursing homes have not had a Medicaid increase in ten years to care for patients. They are compressed with all these regulations on what they have to do, who they have to post, who’s on call, and yet, we’re gonna now require that they’re hourly people are shifted up to $15 dollars, but we’re not gonna give them an increase. How do you do that? They’re not gonna be able to take the patients.

Then what do we do? Are they gonna be staying here? I mean we have not thought about the long-term effects and not our nonprofits. You know, they’re scared to speak up because they know they rely on our funding but how do you not compensate -- look at what we went through last time. This big huge bill so we could raise people up to $14.75. That was a massive thing. They hadn’t had an increase in years, and now we’re pushing it up to $15 dollars,
so think about what that’s gonna do for the nonprofits.

When I did my research -- and it’s not anecdotal -- I looked at another state, and I used this argument in Appropriations, and I looked at Seattle because Seattle had a thriving economy, unlike Connecticut, and they raised their minimum wage to $15 dollars an hour. And, here’s what they experienced, job loss, people went to part time. It was absolutely disproportionately affected for the low-skilled worker, the entry-level, the person without skills. That’s who got hurt the most. Between the ages of 16 and 22, the impact was significant. What they also found was if an employer was going to be paying $15 dollars an hour, he demanded or she demanded a different kind of worker. They didn’t want somebody who was not skilled. They want somebody who came with qualifications and skills because they were paying more for them. They also demanded more out of that person at $15 dollars an hour.

I do have a degree in economics, and when you look at the American Economic Review, it shows clearly that raising the minimum wage decreases opportunities for those who need it the most. It decreases jobs, and your economy is only going to grow when you start adding jobs to it. We need Connecticut’s economy to start going and to start growing, so adding jobs or losing jobs, growing the economy or compressing an already distressed economy? In fact, if you look at the clear data, it shows that a one percent -- a one percent increase in wages equates to a one percent decrease in employment. So, think about what a 48 percent increase is going to do to our economy here in Connecticut.
I want to leave you with this. The Society of American Labor Economists have shown 73 percent of them believe that the minimum wage disproportionately affects those low skilled workers. It hurts those who need it the most the most, and 94 percent of them -- these are American Labor Economists -- 94 percent of them have stated that raising the minimum wage is not an efficient way to try to raise people out of poverty. It actually has the opposite effect.

So, I ask you in this Chamber, which I would assume probably everybody’s minds are made up, but you think about what we want to do and how we get there, and I truly believe that everybody here wants to help women. We want to help those that are disadvantaged. We want to help those who are lower in the skillset. But is this the way to do it when the data clearly shows by raising the minimum wage, especially this quickly, the effects are not what we want. They are negative, and our economy is already lagging here in the State of Connecticut. So, I ask you, I invite you to please not support the bill as written.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Somers. Will you remark further? Senator Berthel for the second time.

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND):

Thank you, Madam President for the second time, and good morning.

THE CHAIR:
Good morning.

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND):

Madam President, I have a couple of questions for the proponent of the bill. If I may, please?

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed.

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND):

Thank you, Madam President. Through you to the proponent. We heard a conversation in the circle earlier this morning or late last night that amusement parks are exempt from our minimum wage, and my question to the proponent is are amusement parks exempt from the minimum wage law in Connecticut?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

When I was referencing exemptions from the minimum wage, I think I specifically mentioned that they are camps and resorts that operate for less than six months of the year, and those are stated in the Connecticut statute -- the current statute as being exempt. I’m aware that there are also federal exemptions that one can get, and it -- I’m not convinced that it’s all amusement parks, but I think there could be some amusement parks that qualify for federal exemptions.

THE CHAIR:
Senator Berthel.

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND):

Thank you, Madam President. I thank the Chair for the answers. So, can we take a look -- can we reference the statutes? I believe they are section 31-58, section e, that actually prescribe what the exemptions are, and in that exemption, there is very specific language about what defines a resort and a camp. So, I guess I would ask again where in the statutes are amusement parks like the example I stated with Quassy park in Middlebury exempted from our state’s minimum wage law?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Berthel. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

As I stated, camps and resorts are exempted from under our statute as you mentioned, and I think you correctly referenced the right section of the current statute, and if amusement parks are exempted, they would get their exemption from some federal statute that I don’t have before me.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Berthel.

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND):

Thank you, Madam President. And, I thank the Senator again for the answers. We have -- I’ve been in contact with OLR, and the -- apparently, the Department of Labor agrees that there are no
exemptions for amusement parks, in fact, for -- for Connecticut, but we can actually take care of that now. Madam President, the clerk is in possession of LCO 8914. I ask the clerk to please call the amendment.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

CLERK:

LCO No. 8914, Senate Schedule A.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Berthel.

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND):

Thank you, Madam President. I move adoption of the amendment, waive the reading, and seek leave to summarize.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed.

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND):

Thank you, Madam President. This is a very simple amendment. This will at line 55 of the bill as amended will exempt from the minimum fair wage requirement an employer and employees who work on a seasonal basis and seasonal basis means for a period of not more than 120 calendar days in any calendar year. That is the summarization of the amendment, and I urge support.

Thank you, Madam President.
THE CHAIR:
Thank you, Senator Berthel. Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):
Yes. This Amendment LCO No. 8914 would exempt seasonal workers -- all seasonal workers from the fair minimum wage, and I urge rejection of this. I ask my colleagues to vote no on this amendment, and I would hope that we would have a roll call vote.

THE CHAIR:
Thank you, Senator. Will you remark further on the amendment? Senator Fasano.

SENATOR FASANO (34TH):
Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I rise to support the Amendment and for one of the major reasons is what we heard in this discussion is some conversations that amusement parks were excluded; and therefore, this bill would not harm those seasonable amusement parks. When in fact, that is not accurate, and a representation was made to entice those to vote for this, that minimum wage would not be paid in those scenarios, and what this bill does is clarify that without this amendment going forward that minimum wage would be required resulting in some payroll increase of $104,000 dollars.

Now, there’s only two things that are gonna happen with that. Either the facility is going to close or it’s going to raise its prices. Anything that a business like that can absorb, particularly seasonal, so if the intent was and I think it was to exclude these types of businesses, this clearly --
this amendment clearly makes that happen and makes this bill a much better bill.

Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Fasano. Would you remark further on the amendment? Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

I would just like to make sure that our colleagues know that it was not the intent to exclude all seasonal workers or to exclude amusement parts, and I think the intent of our bill is very clear, and therefore, I would urge that our colleagues vote no on this amendment.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Will you remark further on the amendment? Will you remark further? If not, the clerk will take a roll call vote on the amendment.

CLERK:

Immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate. Immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate. Immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate on LCO 8914.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Has everyone voted? Members will please check if their vote is properly cast, and the clerk will announce.

CLERK:

HB No. 5004, Senate Amendment A LCO No. 8914.
Total number Voting       35
Total voting Yea          15
Total voting Nay          20
Absent not Voting         1

THE CHAIR:
The amendment fails. Will you remark further on the bill? Senator Champagne.

SENATOR CHAMPAGNE (35TH):
Thank you, Mr. President. The clerk is in possession of LCO No. 8873. May I ask the clerk call -- please call the amendment?

THE CHAIR:
Mr. Clerk.

CLERK:
LCO No. 8873, Senate Schedule B.

THE CHAIR:
Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Senator Champagne.

SENATOR CHAMPAGNE (35TH):
Thank you, Mr. President. I move adoption of the amendment, waive the reading, and seek leave to summarize.

THE CHAIR:
Please proceed, sir.

SENATOR CHAMPAGNE (35TH):
Thank you. Basically, what this amendment does is it — it exempts municipalities from this minimum wage. The reason for that is most municipalities run an afterschool program, before school program, and they also run a summer camp. Those are mainly run by our high school kids and during the summer, college kids. Those programs are self-sustaining. Many of them contain youth that are — it’s getting early — many of the youth that go to these camps do not come from money, and what will end up happening because this is self-containing this will pay for itself. At $15 dollars an hour, we are going to have to limit the amount of people going in, and it’s going to be more expensive for these families that cannot afford it. Again, this is a self -- many of these are self-sustaining, and that is why I’m asking for this amendment. Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Champagne. Will you remark further on the amendment? Senator Kushner. Senator Kushner, do you —

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

I was going to defer to my colleague, Senator Hwang.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH):

Good morning, Mr. President, and thank you for the yield, ma’am. Through you proponent to the question to the proponent of the amendment.
Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, sir.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH):

I think this exemption for a municipality is absolutely essential. I think I mentioned in my initial testimony in the underlying bill is the fact that we are proposing an unfunded mandate on our municipalities through this, and I know just yesterday we had cost -- our small town executives come in, share the cost for them having a very difficult budget. This will translate to property tax increases, which you don’t say.

Through you, Mr. President.

SENATOR CHAMPAGNE (35TH):

Yes. This is a direct increase. Actually, this is a self-sustained program, so this will not. For other positions within the community that would fall under this, which are less than the amount of camp counselors, it will be a direct increase to the property tax.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Hwang, you have the floor.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. I know that the morning is long, but I want to thank the proponent for raising this, and I urge support of this because our municipalities struggle enough as it is. This is, again, an unfunded mandate that would have
devastating impact on our municipalities to manage their budget, so I urge support of this amendment.

Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Will you remark further on the amendment? Will you remark further on Senate Amendment Schedule B? Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. I -- I actually am very familiar with the good Senator from Vernon’s town because my kids and my grandkids live there, and -- and I can say -- I can assure you that all of them support this increase I the minimum wage, as well as their friends and a lot of their neighbors, and so I would urge that my colleagues vote no on this amendment because it would exclude municipalities from the bill. I would like to ask for a roll call vote.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Senator Kushner has requested a roll call vote on Senate Amendment Schedule B. Is there additional comments? Will you remark? Will you remark further? If not, Mr. Clerk, if you announce the pendency of a roll call vote on Senate Amendment Schedule B?

CLERK:

Immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate. Immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate. LCO No. 8873 Senate Amendment B.
Immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate. Senate Amendment B LCO No. 8873.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. We remind those in the gallery that under our rules there is no videotaping here. Thank you. I also would ask the members to please stay close to the Chamber because we believe roll call votes will come in fairly rapid succession. Have all the members voted? Have all the members voted? Please check the machine to make sure your vote is properly cast. So, Mr. Clerk, if you would announce the tally?

CLERK:

Senate Amendment B LCO No. 8873.

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THE CHAIR:

The amendment fails. Will you remark? Will you remark further on the bill? Senator Somers.

SENATOR SOMERS (18TH):

Yes. Good morning, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Good morning, Senator.

SENATOR SOMERS (18TH):
And, I believe that the clerk is in possession of LCO No. 8866, and I ask the clerk to please call the amendment.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

CLERK:

LCO No. 8866 Senate Schedule C.

SENATOR SOMERS (18TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. I move adoption of the amendment, and I waive the reading and seek leave to summarize.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, Senator.

SENATOR SOMERS (18TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. This amendment that you have in front of you is to exempt employers for nonprofit entities, not-for-profit hospitals, nursing homes, and institutions of higher education.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Will you remark further on Senate Amendment Schedule C?

SENATOR SOMERS (18TH):

Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. President. The reason for this amendment is because these entities that I just listed are dependent on the state of Connecticut for funding. We have done nothing that I can see, that the Senate can see that has
increased the amount of money that they will be getting, so therefore, we are not certain how, number one, they will be able to absorb this increase in the minimum wage, and secondly, we have heard overwhelmingly from nursing homes, from non-profit hospitals, and from nonprofits themselves that they will be absolutely effected in a most negative way by the increase in the minimum wage, so we ask that they are exempted from this quick increase in the minimum wage going up to $15 dollars an hour in the next few years as it will have a negative effect on the care that we provide for our citizens of the state of Connecticut, those who are employment in these areas, and therefore, I request that the Senate Chamber take serious consideration and please accept this amendment and vote in support.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Would you remark on Senate Amendment Schedule C? Senator Hwang.

SENATOR HWANG (28TH):

There you go. Thank you, Mr. President. And, I’ll be quick again. I rise in support of this amendment, but I’m cautious because at the same time the underlying bill is -- is a grave concern to me as I shared earlier, but as I look at the issue of our nonprofits -- our hospitals and our education institutions -- these are institutions that have been facing tremendous budgetary pressures that we as a state impose on them, so through this amendment, I urge support to give relief and to ensure that we do not put this, again, on their
burden of -- of the rising minimum wage on them. I urge support.

Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Would you remark further on Senate Amendment Schedule C? Senator Moore.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND):

Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I would ask you not to -- my colleagues not to accept this. I have run a nonprofit for 18 years. I’ve never paid anybody less than $15 dollars an hour starting in the year 2002. I also want to say that, you know, there are state caregivers that are being paid $15 dollars an hour because of their contract. I think they do some very important work taking care of the elderly, taking care of the sick, and taking care of our children, and they deserve the $15-dollar wage also.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Moore. Would you remark further on Senate Amendment Schedule C? Senator Somers.

SENATOR SOMERS (18TH):

Yes. Thank you, Mr. President. I would just like to remind the circle that our nursing homes have not had a Medicaid increase for the care of those that they are caring for -- those are Medicaid patients here in the state of Connecticut -- in over a decade, and our hospitals are non-for-profit hospitals, are looking at $900,000-million dollar
loss should the budget that we’ve seen go through. How are they going to absorb these increase in costs?

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Somers. Will you remark further on Senate Amendment Schedule C? Senator Champagne.

SENATOR CHAMPAGNE (35TH):

I rise in support of this because of the nursing homes. We already heard that some of our care for elderly they’re going to go on strike because they are looking for a raise; yet, now we are going to go ahead and -- and take money away from our nursing homes, and again, this is going after -- if they pay more to the workers, how are they going to take care of the patients?

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Will you remark further? Will you remark further on Senate Amendment Schedule C? Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

I would urge my colleagues to vote against this amendment and vote no on this amendment, and I would like to ask for a roll call vote.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Roll call vote has been requested, and will be ordered at the appropriate time. Is there additional comment? Will you remark
further on Senate Amendment Schedule C? If not, Mr. Clerk, if you would announce the pendency of a roll call vote on Senate Amendment Schedule C?

CLERK:
Immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate.  Immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate.  Senate Amendment C LCO No. 8866.  Immediate roll call vote in the Senate.  LCO 8866 Senate Amendment C.

THE CHAIR:
Have all the members voted?  Please check the machine to make sure that your vote is properly cast.  And, Mr. Clerk, if you would announce the tally?

CLERK:
On Senate Amendment C, LCO 8866.

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THE CHAIR:
The amendment fails.  Would you remark further on the bill?  Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH):
Good morning, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:
Good morning, Senator.
SENATOR WITKOS (8TH):

The clerk has in his possession LCO No. 8893. I ask the clerk to read the amendment.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Mr. Clerk, if you would read the amendment, which will be designated Senate Amendment Schedule D?

CLERK:

LCO No. 8893, Senate Schedule D.

THE CHAIR:

The Senate may stand at ease for a moment.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH):

Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH):

If I may, I’ll just summarize the amendment?

THE CHAIR:

Okay. Thank you very much. Senator, if you would please proceed.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. Simply put, this amendment is, in my opinion, a clarification of the debate that transpired here in this Chamber as compared to the debate that transpired in the lower
Chamber a couple days ago last week. I was very interested in this topic, so I watched a lot of the -- not all -- but a lot of the debate that took place in the House, and one question in particular that the House Chair answered was that the number of days that somebody would be on a training wage would be working days -- the actual days worked versus the number of calendars. Because of somebody took a week’s vacation off in-between there, the purpose of the 90 days is to make sure that they’re fully trained to receive the higher-end wage, and then I heard in this Chamber that the 90 days is actually 90 calendar days, and this amendment moves to -- I think -- capture the spirit of the law -- spirit of the proposed law. It captures the spirit of what the House Chair of the Labor Committee had answered in debate, and I’d ask the Chamber’s adoption of the amendment.

Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Witkos. The amendment has been moved. Will you remark further? Will you remark on Senate Amendment Schedule D? Senator Kushner.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):

Thank you, Mr. President. I think the bill is very clear and our discussion has been very clear. I urge all my colleagues to vote no on this amendment, and I would like to ask for a roll call vote.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Kushner. A roll call vote has been requested and will be ordered at the appropriate time. Would you remark further? Will
you remark further on Senate Amendment Schedule D? If not, Mr. Clerk, if you would announce the pendency of a roll call vote in the Senate on Senate Amendment Schedule D?

CLERK:

Immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate. Immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate on Senate Amendment D, LCO No. 8893. Immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate. Senate Amendment D, LCO 8893.

THE CHAIR:

Have all the members voted? Please check the machine to make sure that your vote is properly cast. And, Mr. Clerk, if you would announce the tally on Senate Amendment Schedule D?

CLERK:

Senate Amendment Schedule D, LCO No. 8893.

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THE CHAIR:


SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH):
Thank you, Mr. President. I know it’s been a long night, and I don’t have a long speech. I don’t have a lot of prepared remarks, but there are a few things I do want to comment on. I said at the very beginning of this evening that I was honored to bring out this bill, and I’ve heard a number of people comment on how hard I’d worked on this bill, but I’m well aware that there are many, many people who have worked harder than I have. This has been something that’s been before our legislature in the past, and I am so excited that this is the year that we’re going to pass the new minimum wage, but that really -- the credit really goes to the members of this caucus, particularly the leadership -- Senator Duff and Senator Looney. I know this has been something that you have worked hard on and cared deeply about, but there is also a whole lot of other people who have worked incredibly hard on this, and you know, I come from Danbury, and that’s right on the border, and when I would go out and talk to people about this issue, I found that they were very much aware of the conditions in Danbury compared to the other states right across the border from us.

And, one of the reasons that became so sharp recently is because of a study that was done and announced called ALICE, and I’m not gonna talk a lot about it. I think you all not about this. This is the Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed people.

Now, in Danbury, they reported there are 29,426 households and nearly 15,000 of those households are living under poor circumstances. That’s a lot of people in my community. There’s a lot of statistics that have been stated tonight. I’m not one to state, you know, study and prepare statistics, but I know this bill that we are going to pass tonight is
going to help those 15,000 families. It’s going to make a huge difference, and so I am extremely proud to do this. When I say there’s a lot of people that have worked hard, you know my good Senator Marilyn Moore she spoke about the people that are sitting up here tonight, and I’ve been thinking about them all night. When I first jointed the Fight for 15, I was a union representative, and I went to Burger Kinds and Wendy’s and Walmarts, and I joined in those demonstrations. I was excited to be there with these workers who were fighting for 15. I didn’t really imagine at that time that I would be here in this Senate Chamber bringing out the Fight for 15 Bill that would make the fight for 15 a reality. It never crossed my mind, but standing here tonight, I have to say this is like one of the most important moments of my life to actually be able to pass a law that will make a difference for so many people. I know there is something that we often said at the end of every one of those demonstrations and it was in Spanish, which was appropriate, and it was [Speaking Spanish]. And, tonight we have realized that -- [Speaking Spanish].

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you very much, Senator Kushner. Would you remark further on the bill? Mr. Majority Leader.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you for this debate tonight and everyone in the circle for this, and thank you to Senator Kushner for all that she has done to bring us to this point. She is very great with her praise of everyone, and she deserves
a lot of the praise as well along with Representative Porter who has worked very, very hard on this legislation, and it has been a long time coming. This is not a piece of legislation that just started in January when the session started. Many of us have spoken about raising the minimum wage over the last two years. We have spoken about it passionately. We spoke about it last Fall. We talked to our neighbors, to workers, to a number of different folks, and have really been very, very passionate about helping working people here in the State of Connecticut.

But, we have in that process of listening to people we have listened to business owners, business leaders. As a matter of fact, even the commission on fiscal stability said raise the minimum raise but do it over four years. We’re doing it over 4-1/2 years. We’ve listened to the Restaurant Association. We have listened to a number of different groups and taken all of that into consideration. I’ve seen Senator Kushner and Representative Porter and others who have diligently worked and listened and spoken to various interest so that we can raise our minimum wage but do it in a way that makes sense for the State of Connecticut.

When we think about what I’ve heard tonight, and -- and so many different passion statements is about whether the minimum wage is good or bad for our state, and -- and certainly, I fall on the side that it is good for our state and that it will help our state, it will help our workers because we know that many people are struggling not only in the State of Connecticut, but they’re struggling around this country, and it would be great of Congress would actually raise the minimum wage to $15 dollars as
well, but in the absence of what they’re doing, we are forced to act. I was very, very proud many years ago when President Obama came to Central Connecticut State University and gave a speech, and we raised the minimum wage to $10.10, but since then, we have fallen behind, and all one has to do is to look at workers who are struggling because they can’t afford to live on $10.10 anymore. It’s not a real wage for them.

And, so we have to as a legislature we have to come in and we have to make a statement. We have to vote to give them a raise as well. We think about --

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Duff. I’m just going to pause for one moment and ask our guests in the gallery to please follow the Senate rules, which prohibits filming. So, please respect our rules. We welcome you here, but we ask you to follow them. Please proceed, Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. And, so it’s not just what I think and what we think and as passionate as we feel about raising the minimum wage. There is data as Senator Bergstein had mentioned about the minimum wage and how that impacts our economy. The U.S. Census Bureau, which I all think we could agree would be -- would play it straight down the middle has said that although the details of the estimates differ, we consistently find that raising the minimum wage increases incomes at the bottom of the distribution and that this increase persists for several years, so 20 years of government data says
raising minimum wage is good for workers, businesses, and the economy. It works. It works.

And, if we can go back in history and look back in the 1950s when things were a little fairer, when CEO pay was only 20 times higher than the average worker, which at that point is still a lot, but now in 2017, CEO pay was 361 times higher than the average worker, but surely they have gotten a raise, surely our workers can get a raise as well. And, back in 2017, the average CEOs raise was six percent. Our workers did not get a six percent raise in 2016 or ’17, so this is why we’re here tonight. The folks who are making minimum wage don’t have a voice, and we have to give them that voice. We have to stand here and give them that voice this evening, to say we’re going to help you over the next 4-1/2 years to have a better wage, to be able to put food on the table. They will have better financial security to be able to afford various things for your kids whether it’s clothes or sneakers or school supplies, or maybe to pay for the field trip that they need to send their kids on, so this is real world. This I important. These are the things that impact people’s lives each and every day.

Connecticut is not a race to the bottom. We’re a race to the top. We want to make sure that people have a good quality of life here as they can raise their families here. They can live in safe affordable housing. That they don’t have to make bad choices between food and paying the rent or paying the mortgage, and so this is why we are here at 2:20 in the morning because we all feel so passionately about this issue, and we want to ensure that workers have a raise, that they’re able to
afford the things that many of us can afford as well.

So, Madam President, I urge my colleagues to support this bill to give our workers a raise, to raise their quality of life, and what I -- what I feel is to do the right thing.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Duff. Will you remark further? Senator Fasano.

SENATOR FASANO (34TH):

Good morning, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Good morning.

SENATOR FASANO (34TH):

Thank you very much. Madam President, because the hour is late or the morning is early -- however you look at it -- I will go reasonably quick and make it a summary. I’m not going to go back through many of the arguments that my colleagues around the circle talked about and businesses and the impact. I want to take a little different approach. The reason why we say it’s struggling in Connecticut is just because it’s too expensive to live in Connecticut. That’s the problem. It just cost too much to be in Connecticut, so the answer is, apparently, let’s raise the minimum wage, but while we’re putting more money by raising the minimum wage in one pocket, from the other pocket, we’re gonna see a bill I assume next week, which is paid family leave, and
we’re gonna take that out of your other pocket because we know better, you need that insurance, we’re gonna take it out of that other pocket. Budget’s gonna come out. There will be new taxes and fees. That’s gonna come out of the other pocket, and then there’s the ever present toll issue, which will again take money out of your pocket. So, why are we raising the minimum wage? Are we really raising it to make the person better or are we raising it so we can take more out of the other pocket? As someone said in the circle, the best way to help people is to lower taxes and lower the cost of living in the state of Connecticut, and by that definition, you’re giving them more disposable income, but the answer here is no. Let’s raise the minimum wage.

Now, some of the justification I’ve heard around this circle tonight has been big business. If anybody thinks that somehow raising the minimum wage in Connecticut is going to somehow hurt the profits at Target or Walmart or any of those other companies, their sadly mistaken. Who’s gonna get hurt are the ma and pa stores, the small restaurants, the places in your community that’s trying to survive. That’s where it’s gonna be felt. That’s where there’s not room to absorb or perhaps even pass on the cost. That’s where it’s gonna come in. So, while we are sitting here talking about raising the minimum wage so people can survive in Connecticut, we have passed contract after contract with 3.5 percent increase that I keep talking about every time we do it. We passed $50 million-dollars-worth of increased payroll over two years, which means someone’s gonna pay for it, so maybe that’s why we’re raising the minimum raise. It’s so we can take that money out of the that other pocket and pay
for these expenses. The budget keeps going up, fixed costs keep going up. That’s what’s hurting the person from staying in the state. That’s what’s stopping our state from moving forward.

And, let’s talk about that for a moment. Look, I voted for minimum wage in 2008. I think it was 2008, maybe it was 2005, but I voted for minimum wage when the economy was good, when we were moving forward. We had a surplus. Businesses were growing. Connecticut was on the forefront of economic expansion, and I agree we could talk about it. We haven’t recovered from the jobs -- I guess it was 2006 now that I think about it -- we haven’t recovered from the recession of 2008. We still haven’t put back into Connecticut all the jobs we lost in 2008. We’re the second state in the country not to recover from the 2008 recession. In Northeast, we’re the least of the GDP. Everybody’s saying a year from now we will be in a nationwide recession. Maybe so, maybe no, I don’t know. Connecticut never got out of the first. If you don’t think this is going to slow our economy down, you’re gonna have to wait and see because a year from now when we look and our numbers are down and our expenses are up, we’re gonna see how much trouble this state is in. And, the recession is not because of the minimum wage increase. It was because of other factors, but it’s the minimum wage increase that’s gonna add onto this. When we talked about minimum wage sort of Republican and Democrat, we said at least put in a breaker that if the economy is going up, great, but if it starts to go down, let’s freeze the minimum wage for a year or two until we see what the economy does, and the answer was no, we reject that offer.
Madam President, as they said, the hour’s late, so I’ll just wrap it up by saying this. I think there are times we need to increase the minimum wage. I think there’s a time that the economy can absorb it and we can go forward. This is just not the time that we can do it, and if we are going to have tax increases, which I believe we must because our budget has grown and the appropriation that came out certainly increased that budget, and the only way you’re gonna pay for it is some increase some place or some huge cut to Social Services. If that’s where we’re going, why are we gonna double down on that problem by raising the minimum wage and hurting others who are going to close their doors, move on, not hire, and not expand?

Madam President, therefore, because of those reasons, at this time, I cannot support this bill. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Fasano. Will you remark further? Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH):

Thank you, Madam President, and good morning.

THE CHAIR:

Good morning.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH):

Madam President, I rise in support of the bill. First of all, I want to begin by thanking Senator Kushner for her work on this issue, not during the session but during her entire career. The
extraordinary work that she has done in negotiation this bill behind the scenes with the House, with the administration, bringing to bear all of the skills that she had demonstrated so significantly during her long and distinguished career as a labor leader in the State of Connecticut, bringing us to the point this evening. And, I also certainly want to thank my colleague in the New Haven delegation, Representative Porter for the great stamina and endurance of carrying the debate for 14 hours in the House of Representatives last week. I want to thank all of the members of the Chamber this evening and this morning for what I think has been a -- a wonderful, respectful, and insightful debate on both sides, which I think does this Chamber proud in its best traditions.

And, Madam President, I -- I believe that we need to move forward with this because we have had a great deal of discussion about the minimum wage versus the living wage, and we all know that we are talking here about the minimum wage, and it still does fall short of a true living wage in Connecticut even when it reaches the point of $15 dollars an hour in June 2023. Currently, our $10.10 minimum wage represents barely half of what a true living wage would be in Connecticut, which would be approaching $20 dollars an hour. When we reach $15 dollars as a minimum wage under the bill, and again, it will take five increments. There were many people who were concerned that none of the increments be greater than a dollar, and they are not, so it’s one 90 cent increment and then four $1 increments beginning in October of this year and ending in June 2023. When it does reach $15 dollars an hour, it will then represent close to two-thirds of what a living wage is projected to be by that time, which would
probably be in the area of $22 or $23 dollars an hour. That is real progress, and that does provide genuine progress and genuine hope. I think that Senator Anwar made a critical point in his debate when people said, well, the minimum wage is supposed to be a starter wage and no one is supposed to be in it very long and move onto something else and improve themselves while they are there, but the reality is that the minimum wage is really so low that people sometimes have to work 40 or 50 hours a week at two or three minimum wage jobs, and that doesn’t give you any time to prepare yourself to get out of that category, to get out of that rut, and to get into something higher or better. It’s like being -- it’s like running as fast as you can on a treadmill and being told that you should get off that treadmill and get onto something else. There is no time. There is no room. There is no discretion, so that’s not a realistic thing.

In fact, in the -- in the House debate, it was pointed out by Representative Christine Palm that the -- the image of minimum wage jobs is increased to the workforce and springboards to advancement are really largely a myth, and that only five percent advance to a higher wage in the course of a year. That really is a grim reality here. And, research by the Economic Policy Institute indicates that 57 percent of minimum wage workers overall are full-time employees, 37 percent are 40 years of age or older, and 28 percent have children. We are talking about adults trying to manage this. These are not students just looking to get some pocket money to -- to be a mild addition to the family’s middle-class lifestyle. These are people in often -- often desperate circumstances.
Madam President, also, Senator Flexer I think made a key point in the debate about the effect -- the effect on families. She said she was fortunate enough to be -- to be shielded by her parents from some extent from the knowledge of the family situation as they were growing up. That was my situation also. I had very loving parents who were immigrants from Ireland who shielded me from the anxiety of how precarious our situation was for many years when I was a child. Also, Senator Flexer’s point about the misplaced nostalgia for a prior era -- era earlier in this country’s history -- I think it’s important that anyone who romanticizes that era is really putting blinders on, ignoring the fact of slavery existing from colonial times all the way through 1865, the end of the Civil War, 84 years after the end of the American Revolution, and then a brief period of reconstruction in the late 60s and 1870s, followed by another 85 years of Jim Crow Laws, so it wasn’t until the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that there was even a legal basis for freedom and equality in this country, so I don’t think anyone should be nostalgic for any part of the 18th or 19th Century in that sense.

As Senator Bergstein and Senator Anwar mentioned, this is a moral issue. It is a moral issue regarding people’s lives as much or more than it is an economic one, and there are points of view that matter apart from that businesses who may oppose the bill. And, Madam President, I think that is critically important to make here that the -- it’s important to note also that the Federal Reserve has said the typical worker making less than $15 dollars per hour in this economy is someone in her mid-30s and the Connecticut Voices for Children Analysis
found that 90 percent of the worker who would benefit from a minimum wage increase to $15 dollars an hour are 20 years of age or older, and that it is also true that we are talking about a very large portion of our workforce in Connecticut. There are over 330,000 people who are in the category of earning less than $15 dollars an hour, and in some of poorest cities and towns, the percentages are far greater. In our Capitol city right here in Hartford, it’s estimated that actually the majority of workers, 53 percent earn less than $15 dollars an hour currently, and according to that report also, the sub $15 dollar workforce is, of course, unfortunately female, African American, and Latino, and a study by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston has estimated that in our state 33.7 percent of female workers, 43.1 percent of African American workers, and 52.6 percent of Latino workers all earn less than $15 dollars an hour, and again, it will take four years until our minimum wage reaches that level, so it’s not as if anything truly dramatic is being done in this bill, although it does make steady progress and the fact of the -- at the implementation of a -- of an automatic adjustment factor based on the cost of living index years after that will help keep us from what has happened in the decades in past falling back after every increase, the period of time before the next increase means that there has been a net loss.

In fact, I had a minimum wage job when I was in college many years ago that paid $1.60 at the time, but now, that -- that job would pay -- if it were to keep pace with inflation, the minimum wage would probably have to be about $12.80 an hour at present rather than $10.10, and so it’s lost about $2.70
worth of value in current dollars since then in that 50-year period.

I’d like to quote briefly from a -- a recent article by Mr. Ray Dalio. Of course, many of us have heard of him recently with his commitment of funding to help deal with the education crisis in Connecticut, and he is, of course, one of our state’s most successful entrepreneurs and capitalists, and the title of his article is Why and How Capitalism Needs to be Reformed, and he says, “Over these many years, I’ve seen capitalism evolve in a way that it is not working well for the majority of Americans because it’s producing self-reinforcing spirals up for the haves and down for the have nots. This is creating widening income, wealth, and opportunity gaps that oppose existential threats to the United States because these gaps are bringing about damaging domestic and international conflicts, and weakening of Americas condition. He said that I think that most capitalists don’t know how to divide the economic pie well and most socialists don’t know how to grow it well; yet, we are now at a juncture in which either A) People of different audiological inclinations will work together to skillfully reengineer the system so that the pie is both divided and grown as well, or B) We will have a great conflict and some form of revolution that will hurt most everyone and will shrink the pie.” I think Mr. Dalio’s cautionary note is one that deserves careful attention. Because as he points out, we are now in many ways the more -- the most polarized economically as we have been at any time since the gilded age before the turn of the 20th Century, the time if anyone has been to Newport, Rhode Island and seen all of those opulent mansions that were built as -- in fact, some are summer
cottages for people. It shows you what the wealth disparity was between top and bottom in society at that point, and we are pretty much at that point again. As Mr. Dalio points out, there’s been little or no income growth for most people for decades. Prime age workers in the bottom 60 percent have had no real -- that is inflation adjusted income growth since 1980, and this was at a time where incomes were at the top 10 percent have doubled and those for the top 1 percent have tripled, and probably one of the more discouraging statistics that he cites is the fact that the percentage of children who grow up to earn more than their parents has fallen from 90 percent in 1970 to 50 percent today, and that the income cap is about as high as it has ever been and the wealth gap is the highest since the late 1930s in the later years of the depression leading up to World War II.

These are all sobering thoughts and statistics and all the more reason that we have to try to find a way for our lowest income workers to break out of what really is a cycle of employed poverty, and I think one final perspective not really explored earlier is that of sort of the thought of human mortality and the precious value of time. Perhaps, an adequate minimum wage wouldn’t be such a human tragedy if time were limitless and life was unending, but if we think about it low wage jobs often are ones that -- that can be -- can be quite grim. That is not all are. I’m sure that some can actually be pleasant in their conditions, but the conditions in which many people work many hours and many, many years as we’ve seen not just in their youth are not vocations, are not professions, are not careers, are not the kind of work that we do here where we don’t pay attention or even notice the
hours as they pass because we appreciate the value of being here, and it absorbed into work we do here and know it’s importance and appreciate it’s value even if the pay is low and hasn’t been raised in 18 years, but for many, many minimum wage jobs, people have the sense of time hanging heavy. That was certainly my experience as a toll collector at the - - not to raise a sore subject in this Chamber [Laughing] of what we may be dealing with in other ways -- but I spent a summer as a toll collector on the West -- at the West Haven toll station in the days where there were tolls every ten miles in the state of Connecticut once when I was in -- in college, and the experience there reminded me -- if any have ever seen the movie Modern Times with Charlie Chaplain working on the assembly line where he has performed the same motion of tightening a bolt all day long and at the end of the day when he goes to -- to ring out and goes out of the factory, onto the street, he is just spasmodically performing the same motion as he walks along the street and the crowd passes and people think he’s crazy, so they cross the street to avoid him. My experience the last weekend I was there was the Labor Day Weekend, and I was in the lane next to the exact change lane, and the exact change lane broke down. It was not functioning, so everyone who had a quarter came to me, and I was taking the quarter, pressing the button, taking the quarter, pressing the button. I felt very much like Charlie Chaplain at that moment. I was praying for somebody to come along with a dollar bill that I could change or with a toll ticket to break the monotony, but almost no one did during that whole eight-hour shift in my last weekend there, but I only had to deal with that for eleven weeks. There are people who have to deal
with that kind of situation for an entire lifetime and an entire career, and that I think is one of the reasons that we have to think about the human reality of someone who is standing, working in a minimum wage job, watching the sands of time flow through the hour glass, selling their labor for pennies in this economy. That, I think, is something that is grim. Meanwhile, at the other end, through our tax code, we protect those who may never have worked at all because they have the blessing of living on inherited wealth through no effort or no merit of their own other than winning the biological lottery of being born into a wealthy family, so someone who inherits $2-million dollars a year and by modestly and passively investing it at five percent will earn over $100,000 dollars per year even if that person never gets out of bed in the morning for that whole year and doesn’t do a lick of work, but a minimum wage worker will be grinding away to make $21,000 dollars a year working 40 hours a week for the full year. There is just built in inequity in our system.

Again, why do we allow everyone to inherit on a stepped-up basis all of the value of stock and other things that they inherited without ever doing anything to merit? So, we have a whole lot of forces built into our system that are not accidental, that are built to favor privilege, and to preserve that.

So, it was also mentioned early on that the difference between $10.10 an hour and $15 dollars is perhaps not all that great anyway, but that is certainly not true. If you get to the point of someone perhaps -- the difference between someone who makes a million and a half a year and someone
who makes a million a year, maybe there’s not a dramatic difference in their lifestyle. There’s probably some difference, although maybe not all that dramatic between someone who makes $450,000 dollars a year and someone who makes $300,000 dollars a year, but there is a huge difference -- a huge difference between someone who makes $31,000 dollars a year and someone who makes $21,000 dollars a year as it is now. A person who is making $31,000 dollars a year with a $15 dollar an hour minimum wage may be able to get by, by working 40 hours a week instead of 50, and maybe those other ten hours can then be devoted to taking a course, going to a community college, taking a certificate program as Senator Anwar mentioned earlier. That would be a huge, huge difference for that factor of an extra $4.90 an hour for an entire year.

So, I urge the Chamber to support this bill tonight, this morning as an investment in Connecticut, as an investment in our future, as an investment in our people.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Looney. Will you remark further? Will you remark further? If not, Mr. Clerk, would you please call the roll and the machine will be open?

CLERK:

Immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate on House Bill 5004. Immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate for House Bill 5004. Immediate roll call vote in the Senate.
THE CHAIR:

Have all the Senators voted? Have all the Senators voted? If so, the machine will be closed, and Mr. Clerk, would you kindly call the vote tally?

CLERK:

House Bill 5004.

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THE CHAIR:

(Gavel) Measure is adopted. Mr. Clerk -- Ah, Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, would the clerk now please call our previous item that was marked PT, Calendar page 52, Calendar 448, Senate Bill 3?

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

CLERK:

Page 52, Calendar No. 448, Substitute for Senate Bill No. 3, AN ACT COMBATING SEXUAL ASSAULT AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT.

THE CHAIR:
Good evening Senator Winfield. Good morning, Senator Winfield.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH):

Good morning, Madam President. Madam President, I would normally move acceptance, but I am going to yield to Senator Flexer who did the majority of the work on this bill; if it’s allowed?

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Winfield. Senator Flexer, do you accept the yield?

SENATOR FLEXER (29TH):

Good morning, Madam President. Yes. I do.

THE CHAIR:

Good morning. Well, very good. Please proceed.

SENATOR FLEXER (29TH):

Thank you. Thank you, Madam President, and I want to thank Senator Winfield for the yield. Madam President, I move acceptance of the Joint Committee’s favorable report and passage of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

And, the question is on passage. Will you remark?

SENATOR FLEXER (29TH):

Yes. Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, the bill that is before us at this early hour of the morning is an important piece of legislation, a
piece of legislation that this Chamber has been working on for the last two years, and it represents an update in some leading efforts to combat sexual harassment in our state, and also catches our state up with much of the rest of the country in terms of how we deal with crimes of sexual assault.

Madam President, this legislation has been contemplated for the last two years, and what’s before us this evening I think is a bill that has broad consensus, a bill that many people have worked on, and a bill that I think will represent a huge step forward. There are four main components of the bill, which I will get into in detail, but Madam President, the clerk is in possession of an amendment. It’s LCO No. 8991. I would ask that the clerk please call the amendment, and I be granted leave to summarize?

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

CLERK:

LCO No. 8991, Senate Schedule A.

THE CHAIR:

Senator, please proceed to summarize.

SENATOR FLEXER (29TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I move adoption.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Will you remark?

SENATOR FLEXER (29TH):
Yes. Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, the amendment that is before us now becomes the bill, and the bill has four main sections. The first section of the bill deals with training requirements and updating our state statutes to ensure that training around sexual harassment in all workplaces occurs in our state to make sure that everyone in Connecticut knows what their rights are, if they’re enduring sexual harassment in their workplace, and to make sure that bystanders and witnesses know what sexual harassment looks like, so that they can support their colleagues and make sure they are being strong allies to make sure that our workplaces in Connecticut are free from harassment. The bill also updates our laws with regard to workplace discrimination in all areas, not just sexual harassment. It enhances the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities. Their office’s ability to enforce these laws and ensure that we have strong workplace discrimination laws. The third section of the bill deals with our criminal statutes and updating the statute of limitations for certain sexual assault crimes. It ensures that sexual assault crimes that are committed against minors have a long period of time, an unlimited period of time for prosecution to occur in our state, and the amendment before us changes the statute of limitations for sexual assault crimes that are B and C felonies against adults to a 20-year period as opposed to our current 5-year period. These provisions will put Connecticut in line with more than 40 states in the country that have statutes of limitations for these sorts of crimes of 20 years or more. Our current 5-year statute of limitations is among the lowest in the country, and so this legislation will be an important step
forward in putting us in the middle of the pack in terms of the length of period of time we give access to our criminal justice system for victims of these crimes, and I think it’s important to note how difficult it can be for victims of sexual assault to come forward, and that’s why this provision is so important. As we have discussed throughout the debate on this legislation, the crime of sexual assault is an incredibly difficult time to endure, and there are many reasons that victims often don’t initially recognize what exactly has happened to them. There is a lot of reason in our society why victims initially blame themselves. They are confused. The trauma that they have to endure is unlike the trauma of almost any other crime, and so this change recognizes that. It recognizes why victims have such a difficult time coming forward, and it also recognizes the structures in our society that have been barriers for victims of sexual assault to come forward. And, so the provisions in those sections of the bill are so critically important.

And, then the last section of the bill deals with the -- the civil side of our law in terms of a victim’s ability to seek remedy in our civil court. It changes the age of a minor from 18 to 21 to allow victims of sexual assault to seek relief both on the civil and criminal side up until the age of 21, as opposed to our current age of 18, and it also sets up a task force to study the issue of statute of limitations on the civil side. We heard really compelling testimony in the Judiciary Committee from victims on both the criminal and the civil side of this legislation, and I have to say that I am deeply disappointed that we were unable to come to consensus on extending the statute of limitations on
the civil side of our law because some of the most harrowing tales that were told in our public hearing were by people who -- people who really hope for an opportunity for some relief, and were not just failed by their abusers but by the institutions that systemically covered up the abuse they knew was happening, and so this legislation sets up a task force where we are going to ask victims to serve on the task force and other interested parties to look at this issue, to look at what other states have done. Many other states have opened up the opportunity for these victims to seek civil relief, and so this task force between now and January of next year will look at the issue and come back to this legislature with some recommendations, and we’ll be able to look at that again.

So, Madam President, in -- in summary, those are the four main components of the bill. This is a really important piece of legislation at a time when more and more victims are mustering the courage that I can’t fully comprehend in coming forward and telling their stories. I believe it’s critical that we move forward with this legislation. I’m grateful that we’ve have such strong bipartisan cooperation on this legislation, and I’m hopeful that we’ll have a fruitful debate on this this evening -- or this morning.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Flexer. Will you remark further? Senator Kissel. Good morning.

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH):
Thank you very much, Madam President. Good morning. As it’s 5:03. I think Senator Flexer might be disappointed because I don’t think there’s going to be any debate on this bill whatsoever. I stand in strong support of the bill. When this bill was coming out of the Judiciary Committee, I had an opportunity to speak at length with Chairman Stafstrom, and he indicated to me at that time that Senator Flexer and others working on the bill had made significant -- I won’t call them concessions but movement regarding some of the issues that were being discussed by various parties and concerns. I think one of the things that most telling is rather than extending the statute of limitations for adults on assault to unlimited, which caused concerns for a lot of people, the moving it from 5 years to 20 years is a compromise. I know many folks had thought 5 to 10, but 20 is livable. Regarding on the harassment portion, it’s something that I think the business community can live with and in fact, CHRO working on a system where video learning can take place such that it’s not extraordinarily costly. So, I just want to thank Chairmen Winfield, Chairman Stafstrom down in the House, Representative Rosa Rebimbas, Senator Flexer. I think it’s a much better bill than what we had before us a year or two ago, and I thin the key word being mentioned as it still was being brought out as bipartisan. We had put forward as a caucus certain ideas, put certain things in, take certain things out, and we were listened to, and I appreciate that, and I know my caucus appreciates that as well, so I urge my colleagues to support this bill and give it a nice vote going down into the House to show that there is indeed strong bipartisan support regarding sexual assault and sexual harassment and how we don’t want
to tolerate either one of those in any way shape or form.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Kissel. We are discussing adoption of the amendment. So, will you remark further on the amendment? Will you remark further? If not, let me try your minds. All in favor of the amendment, please signify by saying, aye. Opposed? The amendment is adopted. Will you remark further? Senator Maroney.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH):

Good morning, Madam President. For the purposes of legislative intent and for clarification for LCO, may I ask some questions of the proponent of the bill?

THE CHAIR:

Yes. Senator Flexer, prepare yourself. Please proceed, Senator Maroney.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Through you, Madam President. My understanding is that under the law a victim under age 18 may bring a civil action for damages within 30 years past his or her 18th birthday. So, effectively, the victim has until his or her 48th birthday to file a claim in court; is that correct?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Flexer.
SENATOR FLEXER (29TH):
Through you, Madam President, yes it is.

THE CHAIR:
Senator Maroney.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH):
Thank you. Through you, Madam President. Under the bill in section 13, the statute of limitations is expanded for all victims under 21 years of age, not just those under 18 under the current law; is that correct?

THE CHAIR:
Senator Flexer.

SENATOR FLEXER (29TH):
Through you, Madam President. Yes. It is. The statute of limitations will be expanded for 30 years beyond the time the victim turns 21, so their 51st birthday.

THE CHAIR:
Thank you, Senator. Senator Maroney.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH):
Thank you. Through -- through you, Madam President. And, how would this new statute of limitations for civil cases impact active claims that have not been filed in court? For example, if a victim was sexually assaulted as a minor and they are an adult today but under 48, could he or she still file a lawsuit in court?
THE CHAIR:

Senator Flexer.

SENATOR FLEXER (29TH):

Through you, Madam President. For sexual assault or abuse that occurred prior to passage, the victims fitting under the old definition of a minor at the time of the abuse will still be able to bring a suit. Although, we are repealing and substituting section 52-577d of the statutes with new language, the ability for those victimized when they were minors prior to passage of this bill would not be negatively impacted.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Flexer. Senator Maroney.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH):

Thank you, Madam President. I’d like to address the statute of limitations for sexual assault of minors. I understand that the most heinous sexual assault crimes committed against minors are class A felonies and that under current law there is no statute of limitations for these crimes, but for class B, C, and D felonies and sexual assault crimes and for a class A misdemeanor sexual assault, the current statute of limitations is five years from when the crime is reported but no later than the victim’s 48th birthday. I’m proud to support this bill because it will eliminate the statute of limitations for all sexual assault crimes committed against minors. For confirmation and legislative intent, I’d like to ask the proponent if she could confirm my understanding?
THE CHAIR:

Senator Flexer.

SENATOR FLEXER (29TH):

Through you, Madam President. The good Senator is absolutely correct. The bill will eliminate the statute of limitations or all sexual assault, sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation crimes committed against a minor. For such a crime that could still be brought under the current statute of limitations and committed against a victim who was under 18 at the time of the offense, there will be no statutes of limitations.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Flexer. Senator Maroney.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH):

Thank you, Madam President. I’d like to thank Senator Flexer for her answers. I know it is very early in the morning, and I would make a brief comment, and I promise that they will be brief. I first want to thank Senator Flexer for her work on this bill and I was fortunate enough to serve in the House several years ago, and at that time Senator Flexer had also helped me. We found out at that time there was a domestic shelter — a shelter for victims of domestic abuse, and the location was revealed, and we learned that it wasn’t a crime at that time to reveal the location of essentially a safe house — safe house for victims of sexual abuse or of domestic violence, and I brought that to her, and she was able to fix that situation and get a law passed, so I’m grateful to her for that.
We’re here to pass public policy. We’re here -- we are all here to do what we think is right for the state, and as we’ve heard tonight, we all may have different views of how to accomplish what is best for the state, but in our hearts, we are all here to do what is best for the state, and we’re not here to legislate our personal beliefs, but I have to admit for me this is very personal. Many of you may know that my cousin, McKayla Maroney, was one of the victims of Larry Nassar, and she was the first one to come forward, and thanks to her strength and her courage he’s been put in jail, and he will serve the rest of his life in jail. I never spoke with her about this. I did speak briefly with my uncle, however, and the impact it had on him and on their whole family, and I know she still struggles, and unfortunately, this past January -- I think it was January -- it’s flown by -- my -- my uncle passed away at the age of 59, and one of my last conversations with him was asking him how he was doing, and he said to me, “You know, I am broken. I will get better. I’ll get through this, but I’m broken.” And, this was my hero, someone [Crying] who I always looked up to and still look up to, and this is what this does to not just the victims but the family.

Last year, during the campaign, I found out that three people I was very close with -- I actually babysat for them -- were all the victims of sexual abuse. They came forward because they wanted to protect my son, my nieces, my nephews. They went to the police, they told their story, they were revictimized and relived their crime only to learn that the statute of limitations had passed, and there was nothing that could be done, and so in many ways, the system let them down, and they didn’t
necessarily -- and unfortunately, for many people who do get to go to court to try their cases, they aren’t always successful, but sometimes that starts the healing process. I know for those people and for my friends they just wanted to be able to ask -- ask him -- you know, the person who had abused them -- why us? You know. Why did you choose us? why did you do this to our life? And, they wonder why he walks around free. He’s not on a sexual abuse registry, and nothing has happened to his life while they are in counseling and they struggle, and I did reach out to them today to let them -- and so I committed to them that if I won I would work to eliminate the statute of limitations, and while we haven’t done that, we are going to move it significantly, and this will help many people. I did text one of them tonight -- and I am wrapping up, so I understand that it is very early in the morning -- and I had asked her at the point if she had wanted to submit written testimony. She doesn’t live in they state anymore -- just to give her the opportunity maybe for healing if it would be helpful for her. She is trying to become more of an advocate, so when I texted her that we were voting on the bill tonight, she wrote back, “I’m sorry I didn’t write a testimony. I kept thinking about it, and every time, I just couldn’t bring myself to start writing about it. I’ve learned to accept it in some ways, but most of the time, I just don’t want to or have a hard time talking about it. Things are pretty good right now, and it is hard to force myself to relive that, but it’s also hard because I feel very passionately about things like changing laws and putting systems in place that aid in screening children for abuse, and I want to fight for it, but I just don’t know that I’m fully at that
point yet. I don’t know if that makes sense. It’s hard to explain. However, I am incredibly grateful for people that go to bat for people like me who can’t find their voice right now but care so much.”

And, I feel incredibly blessed to be given the opportunity to vote, to do something about that, and I’m happy to be with all of you, and ask you to join me in voting to give a voice to those people who don’t have that voice.

Thank you, Senator Flexer, and thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Maroney. Will you remark further? Will you remark further on the bill? Senator Flexer.

SENATOR FLEXER (29TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I want to thank Senator Maroney and the incredible comments that he just shared with us, and I want to thank the bravery and the courage. I want to thank his family and for telling their story and for empowering Senator Maroney to be such a tremendous advocate and partner in this work, and we’re really grateful to them, and I hope that they know that we hear them, and that we admire their strength in sharing what they’ve shared. I do just want to make a couple of points also for -- for legislative intent. As it has been mentioned in discussion here this evening, there has been a good amount of work that’s been done on this legislation. A lot of stakeholders have come to the table, and I do want to just clarify that the training tool for employers that
CHRO will be developing under this legislation will be available free of cost to all employers who want to avail themselves in training in that way and employers can also use other methods to meet the training requirements, and I also want to clarify in the sections that have to deal with working conditions that we want to empower individuals who come forward with allegations of harassment in the workplace that they have to agree to any conditions of their employment being changed, but we also recognize that this provision of the bill means that there may be circumstances where the harasser and the individual being harassed continue to work side-by-side, and that will be a decision that’s made with an empowered employee who comes forward and with the employer. And, we recognize that employers are going to do everything they can to ensure that their employees are safe.

Other than that, Madam President -- Madam President, I want to first of all just take a moment to thank the leadership of the caucus I am privileged to serve in -- Senator Duff and Senator Looney. They have made this legislation a priority of our caucus for the last two years, and I’m grateful to them, and I want them to know that there are more and more people who have the courage to come forward because they see those of us who are so privileged and empowered to serve in the state Senate prioritizing this legislation. They are coming forward because they know that there is a difference to be made here, and I’m grateful that this has been a priority in this state Senate, and I’m grateful that the state Senate is run by such tremendous leaders. I want to thank two members of our staff in the Senate Democrats, Brett Kupfert [phonetic] who’s worked diligently on this legislation and knowing all the
facts and details in that work should not go unnoticed, and I also want to thank Courtney Cullinan, our Deputy Chief of Staff, who has put her heart and soul into this legislation for the last two years. I’m incredibly grateful to her. I don’t know where she is -- oh, there she is. I’m incredibly grateful to her, and we would not be at this point having such broad consensus on this bill if it weren’t for her leadership, so I want to thank her. I also want to thank all of the tremendous advocates who worked on this legislation -- the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence, SEIU, the Connecticut Women’s Education and Legal Fund. And, finally, I want to thank the victims who have come forward and bravely told their story, and first and foremost in thanking victims, I want to thank the great Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Senator Gary Winfield.

Ten years ago when Senator Winfield and I were freshman House members, Senator Winfield in an incredible act of bravery, which I could argue that perhaps I unmatched in my opinion in the time that I’ve been in the legislature, came forward in a hearing in the Judiciary Committee about the sorts of things that we’re finally going to accomplish today, and bravely told his story for the first time of being a victim of child sexual abuse, and he did so because he heard victims in that hearing telling their stories and then being questioned and mocked, and even though he had never told his story before in a public setting, he chose that moment to come forward and share his story to bolster the voices of those that were being brave that day, and his bravery astounds me. And, I am just so grateful to have been able to call him a colleague for the last ten years, and I’m grateful to him for his
leadership on this legislation and his partnership in this, so thank you, Senator Winfield very much. And, I know that there are so many victims who’ve come forward over the last ten years to tell their stories like Senator Winfield so bravely did, and I -- I want to just recognize that there is some disappointment. I’ve had many difficult conversations with victims over the last several months who are disappointed that this legislation doesn’t go further, and I want them to know that they are still being heard, and that their bravery has not been for nothing, that this legislation -- while not everything we wanted and everything we hoped for -- is incredibly important, is moving us forward, is allowing more victims to seek the justice that they so deeply deserve, and it’s also leading a conversation to make sure that everyone in our state knows that being a victim of sexual assault is not okay, and that our state is going to have laws that make sure that that is clear to everyone, and so to those victims, I just -- I cannot express my gratitude deeply enough. As I said about Senator Winfield, they have a bravery and a courage that I can’t fully comprehend, but I hope that they’ll feel a great level of respect for what they’ve done because this legislation is moving forward tonight because of them.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Will you remark further on the legislation that is before us? Will you remark further? Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH):
Thank you, Madam President. Of course, speaking in support of the bill as amended, but this I think is a -- is a historic night, again, on this issue just as on the one just previously enacted. This has been a matter of debate for a long time. It has been for the last two years a matter of intent focus in our caucus. I want to thank Senator Flexer for just the -- the extraordinary passion and energy and leadership and thought and creativity that she has put into this, and to thank Senator Winfield as the Chair of Judiciary. One of the things I’m most proud of in my tenure as President Pro Tempe is the honor of having appointed him as our Judiciary Chair, my friend, and colleague and seatmate from New Haven who in many ways as we know is the conscience of this Chamber.

This is an important bill. I think some have raised issues about the extension of the statute of limitations on the criminal offenses as if it is somehow going to result in injustices to -- to potential defendants who would have difficulty in -- in gathering information for a defense if the charge is brought that long after the alleged event in question. But, we have to realize that the same criminal standard applies to these cases as to -- as to any criminal case. That is a prosecutor has the burden of proof beyond a reasonable doubt, and the prosecutor will have to assess the evidence to make sure that -- that obviously the burden of proving a case that’s 20 years old or more is going to be a real challenging one, so it’s not as if we’re going to see just a gouge of casual prosecutions here. Prosecutors will be operating under the same standard that they have to always, so I think some needless alarm has been raised about the -- the impact of that extension, but the reality of it is
it is necessary because many young victims are just not emotionally prepared to deal publicly with the trauma of what they’ve suffered until a significant amount of time has passed, and this will allow that to happen to a much greater extent under our -- our current law with that five year limitation.

I would also very much want to thank Senator Fasano and Senator Kissel who sponsored the amendment -- the strike-all amendment, which became the bill. It’s important, I think, for an issue like this to be bipartisan and to have -- have leaders on both sides embracing it to move it forward and to -- and to give it priority. And, to all the families in the state like Senator Maroney’s who have suffered, I hope that this is something that -- that they will find some consolation in. We know that the suffering is so raw and so unspeakable in so many cases, but at least I hope they’ll know that the Connecticut General Assembly has a sensitivity to what they and others have suffered.

So, again, Madam President, I would urge support of the bill as amended.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Looney. Will you remark further? If not, Mr. Clerk, if you would kindly call the vote? And, Senator Duff. [Off mic conversing]. Senator Duff?

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

We will have a vote on the bill, please.

THE CHAIR:
Thank you. Mr. Clerk, kindly call the vote, and the machine will be open.

CLERK:

Immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate. Immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate on Senate Bill No. 3 as amended by Senate A. Immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate on Senate Bill No. 3 as amended by Senate A. Immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate on Senate Bill No. 3, as amended by Senate A. Immediate roll call vote in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

And I would ask all the Senators to stay close to the Chamber, because we will shortly have a vote on the Consent Calendar.

Have all the Senators voted? Have all the Senators voted? The machine will be locked. And, Mr. Clerk, would you kindly announce the tally?

CLERK:

Senate Bill No. 3, as amended by Senate A.

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THE CHAIR:

(Gavel) Measure is adopted. Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):
Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, for the purposes of a referral, I’d like to ask Calendar page 36, Calendar 126, Senate Bill 4, to refer that item to the Appropriations Committee?

THE CHAIR:

So, ordered.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Would the clerk now please call the items on the Consent Calendar followed by a vote on Consent Calendar?

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

CLERK:


THE CHAIR:

Thank you. And, Mr. Clerk, would you kindly call the vote? And, the machine will be opened on the Consent Calendar.

CLERK:

Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate. Immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate on Consent Calendar No. 1. Immediate roll
call vote has been ordered in the Senate on Consent Calendar No. 1.

THE CHAIR:

Have all the Senators voted?

Welcome Senator Osten. [Cheering]. All right. Mr. Clerk, would you kindly announce the tally?

CLERK:

Consent Calendar No. 1.

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THE CHAIR:

(Gavel) Measure is adopted. Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I don’t think I’ll have to yield the points of personal privilege or announcements. But I would just mention to the Chamber that Senate Democrats will be caucusing on Monday, and then we’ll be in session Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and we should hold Friday open as well. And, with that, Madam President, I would move that we adjourn subject to Call of the Chair.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. We are adjourned. (Gavel).
(On the motion of Senator Duff of the 25th, the Senate at 3:25 a.m. adjourned subject to the Call of the Chair.)