

Testimony Regarding H.B. 5388: An Act Concerning a Fair Minimum Wage

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Labor and Public Employees Committee

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Good afternoon Senator Gomes, Senator Miner, Representative Porter, Representative Bocchino, and distinguished members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee:

My name is Ray Noonan, and I am testifying today on behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based child advocacy organization working to ensure that all Connecticut children have an equitable opportunity to achieve their full potential.

Children thrive in stable families—ones in which they grow up with roofs over their heads, food in their stomachs, caretakers to nurture their growth, and medicine when they are sick. However, the share of private sector work that pays enough to afford these necessities has shrunk.¹ **Since the Great Recession, Connecticut's economy has experienced a "Jobs Swap"—that is, low-wage jobs have replaced high-wage ones.** From 2011 to 2016, the number of low-wage jobs—those paying less than \$15 per hour—increased by 8.4 percent.² In contrast, the number of mid-wage jobs—those paying between \$15 per hour and \$33.95 per hour—*decreased* by 2.8 percent, while the number of high-wage jobs decreased by 0.6 percent.

These low-wage jobs do not pay enough to support a family. A mother with an infant requires \$28.92 an hour to pay for housing, food, child care, and other necessities.³ Two adults raising an infant and a preschooler must each make \$20.89 an hour to do the same.⁴ Earning less than this jeopardizes many families' economic security as parents try to make ends meet, threatening children's long-term health, educational attainment, and workforce productivity.⁵

These trends have disproportionately impacted people of color. People of color are overrepresented in low-wage work and underrepresented in high-wage work, trends that have worsened during Connecticut's recovery from the Great Recession. In 2011, workers of color constituted 24.1 percent of Connecticut's overall workforce but 36.8 percent of low-wage workers and 21.5 percent of high-wage workers. In 2016, workers of color constituted 29.8 percent of Connecticut's overall workforce but 50.9 percent of low-wage workers and 19.3 percent of high-wage workers.

These trends are especially important as Connecticut diversifies and an increasing share of tomorrow's workers grow in families without adequate means. In 2000, 31 percent of Connecticut's 3- and 4-year-olds were children of color.⁶ By 2015, that share had increased to 48 percent.⁷

We appreciate legislators' concerns about remaining economically competitive, especially with our neighboring states. However, we urge the legislature to address these concerns while regarding the need to support economically secure families. **We support establishing and phasing in a minimum wage that better accounts for the cost of living in Connecticut, allows parents to**

provide healthy food and safe housing for their children, and moves Connecticut toward being a more equitable state for children and families of color.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or need additional information. You can reach me at rnoonan@ctvoices.org or (203) 498-4240 x113.

¹ Noonan, R. (September 2017.) *Update: State of Working Connecticut 2017*. Retrieved from <http://www.ctvoices.org/publications/state-working-connecticut-2017>.

² *Ibid.*

³ Diana M. Pearce. University of Washington School of Social Work. *The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Connecticut 2015*. September 2015. <http://selfsufficiencystandard.org/connecticut>. We averaged the self-sufficiency standard for the regions examined in the report, weighted by population. See our results for different family structures at our [Self-Sufficiency Explorer](#). Average annual self-sufficiency wage for one adult raising an infant is \$60,147.62. $\$60,147.62 / (40 \text{ hours per week} * 52 \text{ weeks per year}) = \28.92 hourly wage needed to be self-sufficient, on average.

⁴ *Ibid.* Average annual self-sufficiency wage for two adults raising an infant and preschooler in Connecticut is \$86,898.27. $(\$86,898.27 \text{ total} / 2080 \text{ hours worked per year}) = \41.78 average hourly wage needed for both parents combined. $\$41.78 / 2 = \20.89 per parent per hour average hourly wage needed.

⁵ American Academic of Pediatrics Council on Community Pediatrics. Poverty and Child Health in the United States. Retrieved from: <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2016/03/07/peds.2016-0339>. Duncan, G.J., Magnuson, K., and Votruba-Dzral, E. Moving Beyond Correlations in Assessing the Consequences of Poverty. *Annual Review of Psychology* 68:10.1-10.22. Retrieved from: <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/4h261200>.

⁶ American Community Survey one-year estimates.

⁷ *Ibid.*