

The CT Low Wage Employer Advisory Board Meeting

June 14, 2016 – 3:00 P.M.

The Legislative Office Building, Hartford

Public Hearing Room 1D

Minutes

Members present: Co-Chair Jamie Mills, Co-Chair James Bhandary-Alexander, Stanley McMillen, Kurt Westby, Merrill Gay, Deborah Schwartz, Paul Lavoie, Eddie Stephens, Helene Figueroa and Merle Berke-Schlessel. **A quorum of members present was reached.**

Members absent: Susan Coleman (out of country on business), and Michael Seid (out of state on business).

Other Attendees: CT Department of Labor (DOL) staff Christopher Caruso and Marisa Morello. Peter Palermino with the CT Department of Social Services, Jean Cronin from Hughes and Cronin, Jim Lohr from Carpenters - Labor Management, Ashley Hebert, Sarah Maloney and Nicole Griffin from the CT Restaurant Association, Isabel Blank from Yankee Institute, Michael Vieira from Sullivan & LeShane, Audrey Richardson from SEIU and Francis D'Ambrosio.

Welcome and open remarks: Co-Chair Mills convened the meeting at 3:08 P.M. The meeting was televised by the Connecticut Television Network (CT-N).

Review and approval of the May 10, 2016 Board Minutes:

Co-Chair Mills entertained a motion by Merle Berke-Schlessel to approve the minutes of the May 10, 2016 Board meeting. Helene Figueroa stated that the minutes were incorrect because she was listed in attendance via telephone. However, the technology didn't work and she was unable to participate. Co-Chair Mills asked that the minutes reflect the correction. **The motion was seconded by Co-Chair Bhandary-Alexander and passed unanimously.**

Presentation: Freedom of Information Laws as they relate to the Board and its activities: Co-Chair Mills introduced Heidi Lane, Principal Attorney from the Office of Program Policy at the Connecticut Department of Labor. Attorney Lane informed the Board that she spoke with staff at the Freedom of Information Commission, and conveyed the following:

- **Public Agency Status:** Under the Law, the Board is considered a public agency. Therefore, all Freedom of Information Laws apply to the Board and its actions.

- Public Notice: All meetings, hearings and activities involving a quorum of the Board must be publicly noticed through the Office of the Secretary of the State and posted on the Board's Webpage. The public can attend these events. If denied, the public can file a complaint with the Freedom of Information Commission.
- Documents: All documents discussed at public meetings, hearings or activities of the Board must be made available to the public and posted on the Board's Webpage.
- Email Communication (between one or more Board members): Such communication is permitted so long as it does not involve a quorum of the Board. If a quorum is reached, then it's considered a meeting of the Board, and must be publicly noticed. If it is not noticed, the public can file a complaint with the Freedom of Information Commission.
- Email Communication (involving a quorum of the Board): Such communication is permitted for sending meeting agendas, minutes, documents, etc. Those outside of the Board (members of the public) are not required to be included on the email. **However, when emails are sent involving a quorum, Board members must refrain from substantive discussion.** If not, the email is considered a meeting and must be publicly noticed. If the meeting is not noticed, the public can file a complaint with the Freedom of Information Commission.

Paul Lavoie asked Attorney Lane if documents used during presentations at Board meetings must be made available to the public, prior to the meetings. She responded no, but the documents must be made available to the public after the meeting, and also posted on the Board's Webpage.

Stanley McMillen asked who is responsible for distributing documents to Board members and the public. Attorney Lane responded that documents should be sent to the Board's staff for distribution and posting on the Board's Webpage.

Combined presentation by the Connecticut Retail Merchants Association, the Connecticut Restaurant Association, and the Connecticut Food Association: A business perspective on raising the Minimum Wage:

Co-Chair Bhandary-Alexander introduced Michael Saltsman, Research Director for the Employment Policies Institute of Washington, D.C. Mr. Saltsman stated that the Associations asked his organization to present before the Board, but he was not representing them, but rather speaking on behalf of his organization. Mr. Saltsman spoke in opposition to raising the Minimum Wage and presented several pieces of written testimony and documentation to support his argument. The testimony and documentation can be found on the Board's Webpage.

Presentation: A perspective on raising the Minimum Wage from a Connecticut small business owner – Doug Wade, Wade’s Dairy in Bridgeport, Connecticut – A four generation family owned business since 1893:

Co-Chair Bhandary-Alexander introduced Mr. Wade who spoke in opposition to raising the Minimum Wage. He felt it would adversely affect his ability to compete. However, he supports the expected increase in the Minimum Wage to \$10.10 an hour, and feels that any increase should include an automatic cost of living increase/adjustment to avoid revisiting the issue each year. Mr. Wade did not present written testimony.

Open discussion for Members: Co-Chair Mills queried the Board on a number of issues concerning scheduling, future presentations and public hearings. **After discussion, the following items were agreed to by the Board:**

- The July 12, 2016 Board Meeting is cancelled.
- A public hearing will be scheduled in Bridgeport for July 20, 2016. The Board’s staff will work to secure a location for the hearing.
- Beginning with the August Board Meeting, monthly meetings will be changed from the second Tuesday of each month to the second Wednesday. The Board’s staff will publish the new meeting dates. The meeting times will remain as is, 3:00-5:00 P.M.
- Co-Chair Bhandary-Alexander offered to present at the August Board meeting. His topic will be “The History of the Minimum Wage in Connecticut.” Board members Stanley McMillen and Susan Coleman will also present at the same meeting. Their topic will be “The effects of the Minimum Wage (and changes) on Low-Wage Workers, Employers, Poverty and State Revenues.”
- For the September Board Meeting, Co-Chair Mills will work to secure a speaker from the University of Massachusetts on the topic of a recent report dealing with the effect of raising the Minimum Wage on the net income of low-wage workers, and how such a raise affects an individual’s eligibility to remain on government entitlement programs.

Helene Figueroa asked if the CT Department of Labor is able to offer stipends to those low-wage workers who will be appointed (statutorily required) to the Board. The stipend would assist in defraying transportation and childcare costs. Co-Chair Mills asked the Board’s staff to look into the request.

Public Comment:

No member of the public addressed the Board.

Adjourn:

After Co-Chair Mills thanked all those in attendance, a motion to adjourn was made by Merle Berke-Schlessel and seconded by Paul Lavoie. **The motion passed unanimously and the Board adjourned at 4:33 P.M.**

Respectfully submitted

Christopher Caruso

Connecticut Department of Labor