Filicia Brown testimony
Low Wage Board Hearing
Bridgeport, CT
July 20, 2016

fillamarabrown@gmail.com

My name is Filicia Brown, and I’ve been a homecare provider for 3 years. I’m from Jamaica, and homecare was the first job I got after coming to this country. I had no idea what I was getting into – I interviewed and started on the same day! Overall, I love taking care of people – I cared for my grandmother in Jamaica for as many years as I can remember – and so doing the same thing here just made sense for me.

I cared for the same client for the past 3 years. She could not do anything for herself. Every morning, I would arrive and help her toilet herself, put her in her wheelchair, brush her teeth, wash her face, give her breakfast, and give her an enema to stimulate her to move her bowels. After she was finished, I would take her to the shower and bathe her, and then put her back into bed. I cared for her 6 hours per day, 30 hours per week.

When I first started with her, the pay was even lower, which meant my client had a much harder time keeping aides because no one wanted to work for that kind of money. Sometimes, there would be no one to care for her, but because I didn’t want her to be alone, I would go in and sit with her, make sure she had something to eat and rehydrate her – even if I didn’t get paid for it. Other times, I would cook from home once my shift was over and then bring her the food.

Even with a pay rate of $13.53, I could not afford to pay my bills, including my rent. Eventually, I lost my apartment. At the time, I had 3 children and was pregnant with my fourth, and I ended up living in a homeless shelter for over a year. The first emergency shelter was horrible: there were rats, and my older sons couldn’t stay with me there. Finally, I made it into a family shelter and reunited with my children. My youngest son, who is now 11 months old, was born while I was living in the shelter. So the entire time I was in the shelter, I was working and caring for my client during the day, and then going home to a shelter every night.

At the same time that I was working and living in the shelter, I was proud to join my union and become active as a member. I knew that our union was the only path to win the improvements that homecare workers like me deserve.

About a month ago, I finally got back into housing – right around the time that my client let me go. Now, I’m looking for new client.

Winning a $15/hour wage with my next client would change my life a lot. It would allow me to maintain my bills and stay secure in my housing. I also took on student loans to pay for my eldest daughter’s college education because I want her to have a better job and a future. In the end, that is what everybody wants in this room: the ability to work, care for our families, and make a positive impact on our community. Please support a $15/hour minimum wage for all working people in Connecticut, so we can all have the better future we dream of.
My name is Junior Maxis, I am a father of two who resides in Bridgeport, CT. I am a full time dietary aide at St. Camillus nursing home in Stamford, CT. With 3 years of experience, I am now making $13.96 an hour. I am also a part time store associate in a grocery store here in Bridgeport, CT.

Low wage work is unfair. People like me should not have to fight for equal pay for equal work. I often work long hard hours between both jobs. Like any other job, I am faced with reduction of hours, causing me a great struggle to provide adequately for my family. Working for minimum wage, there are many sacrifices which I have had to make. I leave home early and get in late, missing many activities with the kids, paying for childcare with the little pay I do receive becomes very frustrating. If the minimum wage was raised to $15 an hour, parents would have the option to work fewer hours and would be able to spend more time at home raising their children. Here in Bridgeport, many people who both collect welfare and works minimum wages are forced to rely heavily on their minimum wage jobs with all the new welfare reforms.

Making $15 an hour would make a huge difference to me and others, guiding our children so they would not have to work for minimum wage jobs. For now the only ones benefiting are the companies, they spend less on our wages the more their company strives. We all deserve a decent living.
Esmerelda Cardoza  
Low Wage Board Hearing  
Bridgeport, CT  
July 20, 2016

My name is Esmerelda Cardoza and I live in West Hartford, Connecticut.

I work in a nursing home in Rocky Hill. I work in the housekeeping department and have been employed there since September of 2015. I make $11.00 an hour. I am not new to housekeeping, as I have been employed in the housekeeping field for years.

Low pay is not easy and it hurts me and my family. I find it very hard to get by week to week. I work 40 hours per week. I gross $880.00 every two weeks but my take home is so much lower. After taxes and insurance I bring home $677.00 every two weeks. There is barely enough money for the basic necessities. I am constantly trying to figure out which bill is the most important to pay. I can’t pay all of them.

I am constantly seeing my bills go up. The electric bill, the food bill, my insurance premiums but my pay stays the same at $11.00 an hour. When these bills go up I have to find a way to make up for it. Usually I have to take items off my grocery list.

I am to be having surgery in the very near future. Yes I have health insurance, but I have to come up with the deductible. I don’t know where I am coming up with the $2000.00 for that. I will have to try and see if I can pick up extra hours at work. There is no guarantee that there are any extra hours available. If there are, I have to sacrifice being with my family and taking care of my home. It will probably take me well over a year to save that money.

I constantly hear that I should be saving money for retirement. There is absolutely no way that I can do that. I do not have any extra money ever. I am barely getting by. I worry about my future when I am no longer able to work.

If I were to make $15.00 an hour, how my life would change and be so much better. I would be able to pay my bills on time and get them all paid. I would have a little extra money to buy extra things at the grocery store. I might someday have the opportunity to save and take a small vacation. One of the biggest things that I would do with some of this money would be to start a nest egg, a bank account for emergencies. I am not able to have that bank account for when things break or go wrong - car repairs, doctor’s visits, fixing a broken appliance. These are all things that I must worry about. I don’t have the money now to plan on breakdowns or emergencies. It is very stressful when things break, and things don’t last forever.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak tonight and hearing my story. There are so many people in the same situation as myself. Please consider raising the minimum wage to help working families of Connecticut.
Christina Mattei testimony
Low Wage Board Hearing
Bridgeport, CT
July 20, 2016

chriskiss203@yahoo.com

My name is Christina Mattei and I’m 26 years old. I’ve been doing homecare for 3 years and I’m from New Haven. I love homecare because it feels more personal and I can make a one-on-one connection with my client.

My current client is disabled and he relies on me to help him shower, get dressed, do his leg exercises, clean the house, go to the store, and attend to doctors’ appointments with him. I also use a hoyer lift to transfer him, and so much more. Without me, he would be lost. Even in 5 short months of caring for him, we’ve become close and he’s given me a key to his apartment. So as caregivers, we really impact and improve the quality of our clients’ lives.

Although we add value to our clients’ lives, that value is not reflected in our pay or benefits. I believe there is no greater value than helping someone else who can’t help themselves. However, I’ve worked for 3 different homecare agencies, and I’ve never made more than my current wage of $13.53/hour, and the pay has often been less than that. My current client only receives 19 hours per week, and his hours have been cut recently. Not only is 19 hours per week not enough for him to get the care he needs and deserves, it’s also impossible for me to make a decent living. For example, I’d love to get a car, but I can’t afford one, so instead I have to take public transportation. I also want to get my own apartment, but because I don’t make enough money, I have to live with my mom. I currently qualify for Husky health insurance; otherwise I would not have health care. I would love to go back to school for a physical therapy career, but with the wages I currently make I can’t afford to go back to school. Also, I currently qualify for food stamps, but in 3 short months the State will take away that benefit because they say I don’t work enough hours to qualify beyond the three month period.

Not only are the current wages too low, but because the hours are so limited, I end up working beyond my hours and simply not getting paid for such hours. For example, if my client has a doctor’s appointment and it goes over my time, or if I’m in the middle of a chore like cooking dinner or doing his laundry, of course I’m going to stay until he’s cared for and the job is done! I typically do 3-4 extra hours per week that I never get paid for. Ironically, if I got paid for all of the hours I worked, I would have the hours to qualify for the continuance of my food stamp benefits!

I desperately need another client in order to be able to afford to do more in my life, but it’s also difficult to work with multiple clients because often the timeframes they need me may conflict, which makes it hard to meet everyone’s needs, especially my own. If we could have just one client with one steady full-time living wage, it would make a big impact and change my life for the better.

So if we made $15/hour and my client could receive more hours as well, I could do way more for myself, like get my own apartment. I would like to make health care my career, but unless I can get paid what I deserve, I don’t see how I’ll ever be able to become fully independent doing this work. And that’s wrong — homecare should be a career that we can do because we love it, which also should allow us to support
ourselves and our families. All of us working people in this room just want a job we can rely on without having to get 2-3 other jobs or depend on public assistance for basic needs. This is why I believe all workers deserve a minimum wage of $15/hour. Thank you.
Raising the Minimum Wage to $15.00 per Hour and its effect on our lower wage Work Force

1. I started my company which provided Janitorial services statewide in 1986 while I was a student at the University of New Haven.
2. I now employ almost 400 people throughout Connecticut.
3. In the past I was very proud when I told people that I paid my employees at least $.50-1.00 above minimum wage in order to attract the best workers.
4. Over the past few years, I have been forced to only pay whatever the minimum wage is in order to be competitive.

How can I justify passing on increasing wage costs to customers?

1. Whether anyone in this room or in our government wants to admit it, companies are moving out of the state or downsizing.
2. Companies in other states, when they’re searching for a new location for a new factory typically (never) don’t choose Connecticut, because of how uncompetitive the state has become.
3. I’ve lost business because companies have either downsized or moved out of CT.
   1. Tenova- Wallingford, down sized and now we only bill them 25% of what we use to bill them.
   2. Quest Diagnostics, Corporate facility in Wallingford- They now only occupy 10,000 sq ft of a 92,000 sq ft building because they built a brand new facility in of all places Massachusetts.
   3. HID Global Manufacturing, North Haven- Moved there Worldwide Headquarters to Austin Texas and built a new 250,000 manufacturing facility.
   4. Bristol Myers, Wallingford to close its 1,000,000 sq ft research facility by 2018. How many high paying jobs will be lost?
Whatever happened to working hard and educating yourself and being able to get a higher paying job?
1. I worked 12-18 hours per day when I started my company in order to keep my customers and see it grow.
2. I paid for my own education at the University of New Haven and my MBA at Quinnipiac University to increase my ability to run a company.
3. Nobody but me created my success and the income that I have because of my hard work.
4. Unfortunately in any society, there has to be some level of suffering or at least being uncomfortable in order to be driven to educate yourself and increase your value.

Where does the money to pay people $15.00 per hour come from?
1. The Rich people who worked hard to get where they’re at don’t pay it all by themselves.
2. The money comes from consumers who are the same people making the new $15.00 minimum wage, so what do they get.

What companies will do if the wage is increased?
1. Consider moving to other states where labor and the overall expense of doing business are lower.
2. Reduce consumption of services. They still may need their building cleaned, but they may still choose to work within their budget. This will result in me or other companies needing less people to service them. I’ve already seen this happen.
3. Automate- Take.Stop and Shop- They may have 15 or so checkouts, but most weeknights 2-3 are staffed with an actual person. 6 or so lanes offer automated self-service checkout and this area is staffed by one person.
Connecticut Needs to find ways to be more competitive against other states and create reasons for companies to move here and invest in our state. Increasing labor costs is definitely not one of them.
Buenas tardes y gracias por escuchar mi testimonio. Mi nombre es Sherlie Navarro. Soy originalmente de Puerto Rico. Durante los últimos diez años he trabajado aquí en Bridgeport como "janitor" a tiempo parcial en Sikorsky. También soy un miembro de la 32BJ, y gracias a mi contrato fuerte, gano $14.60 por hora, y dentro de los próximos dos años voy a empezar a ganar más de $15 la hora.

Estoy aquí, sin embargo, a pedirles que recomiendan un aumento del salario mínimo del estado a $15 la hora. Mi salario es suficiente para sobrevivir, especialmente porque pago algunos gastos con mi novio, que también trabaja como un limpiador a tiempo parcial. Pero me gustaría poder mudar de mi apartamento, para ofrecer mi hijo de 15 años de edad y mi hija de diez años dormitorios separados. En este momento, no es una opción hasta que ganamos un poco más. Esto demuestra que incluso con $15 la hora, la vida es difícil.

Pero esto también muestra lo difícil que es en el mínimo actual -- aun cuando el mínimo sube a $10.10. Estoy aquí para hablar en nombre de todos los miembros de mi familia, mis amigos, y miembros de la
comunidad que se encuentran en esa situación de ganar lo mínimo. Ellos no tienen la suerte de trabajar para una unión que puede negociar un salario digno.

- Mi hermana tiene cuatro hijos y tiene que sobrevivir con alrededor de $10 por hora. Mi sobrina trabaja haciendo las uñas por alrededor de $9. Las dificultades de pago de alimentos, facturas, y especialmente alquiler pueden hacer la vida más estresante constantemente, y lo hace casi imposible tratar de mejorar la vida. Imagínese tratando de sobrevivir con esa cantidad y también tratando de estudiar, como mi sobrina está haciendo.

- También quiero reconocer que, a pesar de mi buena fortuna de tener una unión, que puede que algún día me encuentro en una situación diferente, en un trabajo sin una unión donde los trabajadores no pueden negociar su contrato.

- Otras ciudades y estados han reconocido que las personas que trabajan duro merecen algo mejor. Usted también tiene el poder de influir en la vida de 100,000 trabajadores en Connecticut que están ganando el mínimo actual. Por favor, recomienda a la legislatura un incremento de $15 por hora. Gracias de nuevo por escuchar mi testimonio.
Elaine Brown  
Low Wage Board Hearing  
Bridgeport, CT  
July 20, 2016

eebrown9912@gmail.com

My name is Elaine Brown, I live in Bridgeport, and I’ve been a homecare worker for about a year and a half. I am also an army veteran, and for the past 25 years, I have worked with mentally ill adults, adults living in group homes, and homeless adults living in shelters. My passion has always been helping the most vulnerable in my community, so when the opportunity to do homecare came along, it felt like a natural fit.

My client has cerebral palsy, which means that I basically operate as her hands in everything she needs to do. I assist her with bathing, eating and all activities of daily living. She doesn’t walk so I have to lift her myself and transfer her between her wheelchair and her bed. She loves to go out into the community – to visit with friends, go to the movies, or do her own grocery shopping – and she also takes a class for adults for disabilities to learn self-advocacy skills. She really relies on me, and I enjoy helping her do things to feel more independent. There are days when I may not feel well, but I still try to go in because if I take a day off she may not have anyone who can care for her. Also, I cannot afford to lose pay.

Currently, I make $13/hour, and I work almost 25 hours per week, which is the maximum that any caregiver can work for a single client due to workers comp insurance not currently being provided by the State. I also hold a second job at a home for homeless veterans, and work an additional 25 hours per week there. So even though I work more than full time hours between my two jobs, the rents are so expensive in this area that I either have to get a roommate, or spend every month struggling to make rent. I’m currently searching for a more affordable place to live but having trouble finding one. Because of my limited budget, I no longer take vacations or do any of the extras that we all want to do from time to time. And that’s not fair – I have worked tirelessly over my career to provide quality of life for others, yet can hardly make ends meet myself.

Winning $15/hour will add significantly to my quality of life. If I made $15 per hour, I might not struggle every month to make rent. If I made $15/hour, perhaps I could plan a vacation or do something for myself for a change. Also, if I had benefits such as paid time off, I could take time off without losing income. Finally, I can’t afford to purchase health insurance, so need to rely on the VA for my own health needs. If I wasn’t a veteran with access to the VA, I don’t know what I would do.

In the 21st century, why are we still being paid such a menial wage for the important work of helping another person live independently? We deserve to make a living wage, and $15/hour is the least we can do to put caregivers and other working people on a path out of poverty. Thank you for your time.
My name is Martha Sanchez, and I live on Clover Street in Stratford.

I work as a CNA at St. Joseph Center in Trumbull. I get about $16 an hour. I have over 20 years of work experience. My patients are important to me – other than taking care of them and making sure they have everything they need, I am also their companion. I keep talking to them and making them feel good. Sometimes their own families don’t come see them, which is hard.

I am lucky I have no dependents. All of my kids are grown. If I did, I wouldn’t be able to pay for health insurance, the cost is too high. I have to go outside of my job for insurance. I pay for dental, vision, and regular medical.

At St. Joseph, my union pushed for $15, but daily living is so expensive – rents are going up, as well as car insurance, health insurance, and life insurance – so $15 is a big help, but in reality we need even more to be worry-free about how to get bills paid.
Low-Wage Employer Advisory Board
Bridgeport City Hall
Wednesday, July 20, 2016

DeShawn Brownel
Security Officer with Allied Barton

- My name is DeShawn Brownel. I’ve been a security guard for six years and with the union for about four. Most recently, I’ve worked protecting the grounds of the old Cedar Crest State Hospital.

- At that job I made $13.99 an hour, which will be raised to $14.39 starting September 1, thanks to a new contract that was just signed. That’s a lot better than the rate I made as a non-union guard, and I was very happy to get this job in a very tough economic time.

- My wife also works as a kindergarten teacher at a private religious school, which pays her about $12 an hour. When I’m at my regular job, we bring home about $3,200 a month, while we pay $1,000 in rent for a two-bedroom apartment in East Hartford, so my kids can come and stay with us on weekends.

- I’m fairly close to making $15 an hour now, but the bump to $15 would mean an extra $120 to $130 a month. For my wife and I,
that would cover most of our monthly grocery bill, which frees up some money to pay other bills.

- When you earn below $15, you’re often stuck robbing Peter to pay Paul — holding off on one bill so you can meet another, and then jumping back to the first bill the next payday.

- From my experience working for sixteen years at McDonalds, as well as a security guard for six, I know that if you pay people enough to get by, you are rewarded with employee loyalty. That loyalty goes a long way to saving company’s money by not having to train new employees all the time, but building experienced and efficient workers. Long-term employees also go a long way to building good customer relationships, which is a big value for companies.

- But for me and my wife personally, I can testify to the freedom that a base of $15 would give to workers. It’s the freedom to make choices, to be able to plan, to start moving ahead in life instead of just fighting to stay afloat. That’s why I hope the committee will seriously consider recommending to the legislature to increase the minimum wage to $15. Thank you for your time in this matter.
Testimony in Support of Increasing Connecticut’s Minimum Wage to $15
Derek Thomas, M.P.A.
Low-Wage Employer Advisory Board
July 19, 2016

Co-Chairs Bhardary-Alexander and Mills and Members of the Low-Wage Employer Advisory Board:

I am the Fiscal Policy Fellow at Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based public education and advocacy organization that works statewide to promote the well-being of Connecticut’s children, youth, and families.

I am submitting comments in support of efforts to increase Connecticut’s minimum wage to $15.

Policymakers should be proud that, as of January 1, 2016, 150,000 workers in Connecticut received a 45-cent per hour raise as part of an effort to bring the state minimum wage to $10.10 by 2017.

Even with the anticipated increase of the minimum wage to $10.10, however, a full-time employee working a 40-hour week will earn only $21,008 a year. According to Connecticut’s Self-Sufficiency Standard – a report commissioned by the state’s Permanent Commission on the Status of Women to determine the amount of income required for working families to meet their most basic needs, taking into account family composition, ages of children, and geographic differences in costs – the amount needed to make ends meet for one adult and one preschooler varies from $21.14 per hour ($44,675 annually) in Windham to $36.84 per hour ($77,800 annually) in Lower Fairfield, or from 280 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) to 488 percent of the FPL. Only in two of the 23 regions examined in the report can a single childless adult at the current minimum wage afford to meet their most basic needs.1 A $15 minimum wage makes sense to ensure that full-time workers can afford to live and work in Connecticut.

Who Benefits? Following an economic recovery that has left more children than ever in poverty and has exacerbated racial disparities, strengthening the minimum wage would significantly impact the standard of living for hundreds of thousands of Connecticut workers and their families.2 According to data from the Economic Policy Institute, 336,000 workers (20 percent of the work force) would directly benefit from an increase in the state minimum wage to $15 by 2022.3 Nearly 60 percent of those workers are women, 90 percent are 20 years of age and older, 63 percent work in education and healthcare, retail, and leisure and hospitality, and 36 percent have some college education (see appendix for full details). The increase would disproportionately help workers of color: Of all black workers, 31.8 percent would benefit, and of all Hispanic workers, 37.5 percent would also benefit. Importantly, 13.8 percent (110,424) of all children would also benefit from an increase in the minimum wage.

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3 See our Mapping Disparities by Race and Place project: http://www.ctvoices.org/publications/mapping-disparities-race-and-place
4 Note that this does not account for “ripple effects” likely to raise wages of workers above the minimum wage.

33 Whitney Avenue New Haven CT 06510 Phone (203) 498-4240 voices@ctvoices.org www.ctvoices.org
## APPENDIX: Characteristics of CT workers earning less than the equivalent of $15/hour in 2022

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<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1,605,921</td>
<td>335,656</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>824,850</td>
<td>195,909</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>58.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>781,071</td>
<td>139,747</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20+</td>
<td>1,560,859</td>
<td>301,893</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>89.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>45,062</td>
<td>33,763</td>
<td>74.9%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 24</td>
<td>193,316</td>
<td>114,335</td>
<td>59.1%</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 39</td>
<td>480,009</td>
<td>99,283</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>1,158,475</td>
<td>197,361</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>158,515</td>
<td>50,366</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>176,526</td>
<td>66,192</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other race or ethnicity</td>
<td>112,405</td>
<td>21,738</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single parent</td>
<td>100,543</td>
<td>30,954</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried, no kids</td>
<td>639,498</td>
<td>191,226</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>57.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family income</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than $20,000</td>
<td>94,621</td>
<td>38,424</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000 - $39,999</td>
<td>187,754</td>
<td>66,622</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000 - $59,999</td>
<td>191,473</td>
<td>50,813</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60,000 - $74,999</td>
<td>193,960</td>
<td>35,940</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Industry</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>65,324</td>
<td>11,706</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail trade</td>
<td>173,282</td>
<td>65,711</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education &amp; healthcare</td>
<td>457,965</td>
<td>83,601</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure &amp; hospitality</td>
<td>131,823</td>
<td>61,094</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occupation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>276,118</td>
<td>121,395</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>145,082</td>
<td>51,847</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office &amp; admin support</td>
<td>214,217</td>
<td>53,692</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work hours</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part time (&lt; 19h)</td>
<td>111,277</td>
<td>60,995</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full time (35+)</td>
<td>1,246,762</td>
<td>171,102</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>51.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school</td>
<td>82,201</td>
<td>50,816</td>
<td>61.8%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>389,301</td>
<td>115,537</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>438,518</td>
<td>122,669</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's or higher</td>
<td>695,901</td>
<td>46,634</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sector</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For profit</td>
<td>1,184,785</td>
<td>280,914</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>83.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-profit</td>
<td>159,555</td>
<td>21,150</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Estimated count** | **At least one parent making < $12.86** | **Share of CT Children**
-----|-----------------|---------------------|
801,728 | 110,424 | 13.8%  

**Note:** *Estimated workforce is calculated from the CPS respondents who were 16 years old or older, employed, but not self-employed, and for whom either a valid hourly wage is reported or one can be imputed from weekly earnings and average weekly hours. Consequently, this estimate represents the identifiable wage-earning workforce, a subset of total state employment.*

Low Wage Employer Advisory Board
Bridgeport City Hall
Wednesday, July 20, 2016

State Senator Ed Gomes

- Good evening members of the Low-Wage Employer Advisory Board, and
  welcome to my hometown for seven decades, Bridgeport.

- In that time, I have seen companies like Singer, General Electric, Sikorsky,
  Remington and others close factories in this town, factories that once offered
  a solid living for families that considered themselves proud members of the
  middle class.

- Meanwhile, at the same time as these factories were closing, the wealthiest in
  Connecticut began to do very, very well. according to a recent study by
  economists Mark Price and Estelle Sommelier, while 99 percent of Connecticut
  workers saw their incomes increase by less than 15 % over the past 30 years,
  the incomes of the richest 1 % soared by over290 % in that same time period.
  And that figure is even getting worse. Before 1980, the same study showed
  that the top 1% in Connecticut captured an average of 16.5% of income
  growth during economic expansions. After 1980, the top 1% took 79.8% of all
  income growth. And between 2009 and 2013, they took 100 % of all income
  growth – all of it, every last penny.
• That is why the Fairfield-Bridgeport metropolitan area was recently ranked the second most unequal in the nation. Fairfield County is home to some of the wealthiest investors in the country. And Business Insider reports that Bridgeport has a per capita income of under $20,000 a year, with nearly a quarter of residents living below the poverty line.

• This incredible gap between the wealthy and the rest of us has been hardest for those at the bottom. We know that the federal minimum wage is worth $2 less now than it was in 1968. And though we have increased the wage in Connecticut to $10.10 an hour starting next year, we also know that 90% of those making under $15 an hour in Connecticut are over the age of 20. A rate of $10.10 is an improvement, but it’s still far less than is necessary for adult workers to survive, especially if you’re raising children.

• I believe one critical part of the solution to this problem is for Connecticut to join cities like Seattle and states like New York and enact a graduated raise in the minimum wage to $15 an hour.

• Testimony that we received on the Labor and Public Employee Committee in March showed that this increase would be within the historical average of minimum wage hikes, and it would increase the minimum-to-medium wage ratio from 39 to 44 percent, which is closer to the historical average.
• The wage is still just that—a minimum. The average single mother with one child in Connecticut needs at least $21 an hour to survive. Raising the minimum wage would not solve her troubles, but it would go a long way to achieving some recognition of the need to narrow a gap that is splitting our country apart.

• The experience of Seattle and other states shows that this gradual increase need not result in the dire loss of jobs that some predict. After introducing the $15 minimum wage, Seattle’s unemployment rate hit an eight year low, dipping down to 3.6%, lower than the rate in the rest of the state, where the minimum was not $15. In an article entitled “Hold the Layoffs,” the Wall Street Journal reported that the city of San Jose, California actually saw employment gains after raising the rate to $15.

• The reasons for that are simple: when more money is put into the pockets of poorer workers, those workers spend that money into the local economy. While some jobs may be impacted, many rigorous studies show that those losses are largely offset by the increased economic activity.

• In my many years in the legislature I have heard countless stories like the ones you are hearing today from workers who struggle to make ends meet. I am stepping forward to you here, in my hometown, to recommend that this body
in turn recommends an increase in Connecticut’s minimum wage to $15 an hour to ease the suffering here in Bridgeport, as well as for millions of workers across the state of Connecticut. Thank you for your time and consideration.