



RHODE ISLAND WORKING FAMILIES PARTY

Representative Anastasia Williams, Chair
House Committee on Labor

Wednesday, February 24, 2021

Support for H-5130, Relating to \$15 minimum wage

Chairwoman Williams and Members of the House Committee on Labor,

Below are short testimonies in support of H-5130, to increase the minimum wage to \$15/hour. Many of the below testimonies are in support not only of \$15, but also of expanding the increase to tipped and domestic workers, and of indexing the wage to inflation.

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I support HR-5130 as a necessary measure to address wages and tie it to inflation for many families. This pandemic has highlighted many of the inequities and challenges that people like tipped and domestic workers face on a daily basis. This act to increase the minimum wage to \$15.00 is long overdue. Thank you for your attention to this vital humanitarian matter.

Sincerely,

Clare Sartori
Wakefield

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I'm writing to urge the committee to advocate for a swift increase of the minimum wage to \$15/hour. Tipped and domestic workers need to be included in this increase. We should also tie the minimum wage to inflation.

I support bill H-5130 which moves us in the right direction.

Non-partisan economic experts have indicated just how much a minimum wage increase would bolster our economy. Too many of our neighbors are struggling to make ends meet. Poverty wages are wrong. All work has dignity, and all work deserves to be fairly compensated. I am writing in support of H-5130 to provide a path to a \$15/hour minimum wage in Rhode Island.

Matt DaSilva
North Providence

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The current path to \$15 as proposed would be a major victory for tens of thousands of RI workers and their families, ensuring they can better afford housing, healthcare, and other needs.

I believe that increasing the hourly minimum wage will help workers increase their quality of life as well as increase the contributions they can make to our economy. It will also show our fellow neighbors that they are appreciated, respected, and valued members of society.

The pandemic has made it clear that essential workers don't just work in hospitals. They work to serve other neighbors in establishments like grocery and retail stores, hotels, restaurants, cafeterias, schools, and everyone's beloved Dunkin'.

My younger brother lives with a serious mental illness and depends on a support network to stay healthy. His support network consists of his family, and the Newport Mental Health Center (NMHC.) He depends on Medicare to pay for his medications and appointments. Through the NMHC, he was able to secure an apartment and a job in a cafeteria at the Naval Station in Newport. He earns an hourly wage above the current minimum wage but would greatly benefit from an increase in wages. He is just one of many RI residents whose life would be improved by an increase in the minimum wage.

I also ask that you strengthen the legislation to increase the minimum wage for tipped workers to \$15 as well. In addition to H-5130, I also support a provision that will ensure the minimum wage will be increased to meet the demands of inflation.

Thank you,

Jessica Purcell
Hope Valley

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My name is Maeve Wiesen, and I am writing in support of H-5130. I am a resident of Providence and I am also the Political Director of the College Democrats of Rhode Island.

Rhode Islanders deserve a living wage- right now, people who work full time jobs may still be struggling to pay their bills and survive. This is simply unacceptable. We need to increase the minimum wage to \$15/hour, and we need to do it quickly. An increase too gradual won't help people who are struggling right now. If someone is working hard in their job, they deserve to be financially stable, and that is true for everyone ranging from business owners to people working service jobs. The pandemic has shown just how essential people working jobs at grocery stores and restaurants are. The passage of H-5130 is a critical way to support these people.

Additionally, we need to include tipped workers and domestic workers in the increase. Servers deserve a living wage, and they should not be at the mercy of tips in order to do so. I think we are all familiar with circumstances where someone refused to tip a server because of something out of their control, like the food coming late, or because the customer decided the server did not have a nice attitude. Leaving servers at the mercy of people who do not know their lives and stories is cruel. Including tipped workers and domestic workers in the increase is critical if we want to support all Rhode Islanders with this critical legislation.

Finally, we need to tie minimum wage to inflation. As cost of living goes up, so should the wages that people make. Otherwise, we are leaving thousands of people in this state behind.

As a young person, I often hear people say that minimum wage is designed for high schoolers making pocket money- this could not be further from the truth. People support families and children with a minimum wage salary, and pretending that this isn't the reality is ignorant of real life circumstances.

Thank you for your work, and I hope you will vote favorably on H-5130.

Sincerely,

Maeve Wiesen
Providence

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I support bill H-5130. Everyone deserves to make at least \$15 an hour, especially tipped and domestic workers. This rate does not even keep up with the rate of inflation. Many folks are working 2-3 jobs and still remain in poverty. Passing this bill is the very least we can do.

Marjorie Mann
Providence

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I'm writing in support of H5130, to increase the minimum wage in Rhode Island to \$15 an hour. Sooner is better. It is not right that workers described as ""essential"" and ""heroes"" in the middle of the pandemic, are still denied a living wage. This includes domestic workers and the many employees who rely on tips to make up most of the current, inadequate minimum; they should be covered also.

Although I'm a comfortably retired Rhode Islander, this issue is personal for me. I want to live in a place where my representatives understand that ""the economy"" is supposed to work for people, that people do not work to support some abstract ""economy"" which values them at less than survival level. If we are all truly ""in this together,"" as so many have said during this crisis, can't we respect the dignity of work, and pay people what they deserve?

Donald Baier
Providence

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Rhode Island needs a \$15 minimum wage now more than ever before. Tipped workers must also see an increase in their pay. There is no city or town in RI where workers can afford to rent a modest apartment if they are making under \$26/hour. We need a raise in wages now.

Louisa D'Ovidio
Portsmouth

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Increase the minimum to \$15.00. Everyone deserves a decent life.

Angela Lonata
North Providence

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Quickly increase to \$15/hour, include tipped workers and domestic workers, and tie the minimum wage to inflation.

John Dwyer
Warwick

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Dear RI House Labor committee,

I am writing to express my support for HB 5130. This important bill would quickly increase the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. We also must increase the minimum wage for tipped workers and domestic workers, and tie the minimum wage to inflation.

As a proud Rhode Islander, and resident of Providence, I think it is long past time for our state to require employers to pay their employees a living wage.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jack Rusley
Providence

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I support bill H-5130 because everyone deserves something close to a living wage, including tipped workers, and as soon as possible and tied to inflation. Increasing the minimum wage will

save so much money elsewhere. Poverty and economic insecurity increase education, healthcare, and community support costs to the government. Putting more money into the hands of people with no disposable income means it goes right back into the economy, not into a bank account or the stock market. Most of all, a \$15 minimum wage will just plain old increase the quality of life for so many. If a job exists, it means it needs to be done. Every job and every worker is important.

Joanne Rich
Providence

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I write in support of H-5130 which would provide Rhode Island's working families with a fairer wage, not an ideal wage, but at least a beginning for the people who work so hard to make our economy successful. All workers in Rhode Island, including tipped workers and domestic workers, deserve a minimum wage of \$15.00 an hour so that they will not be struggling with two and three jobs just to make ends meet. This minimum wage should also be tied to the inflation rate, so that our workers will not be losing ground if inflation rises.

Thank you for your prompt and positive consideration of this extremely important legislative issue.

Linda H. Rockwell
West Kingston

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I consider \$15/hr an absolute minimum for what somebody should be paid for their work. It is frustrating and wildly unfair that I rely on minimum wage workers for services that are undervalued. There is a lot of concern that raising the minimum wage will increase prices and I do not doubt that is true. But aren't those increases going to be directly related to workers being paid more? Prices and business models based on artificially low wages isn't right. Will businesses have to adapt? Yes. Will some fail? Yes. Will new businesses fill in? If you believe that Americans are capable of adapting to a new set of rules, then yes. If increasing the minimum wage destroys our economy then we are in a really bad place. Like I started with, \$15/hr is an absolute minimum and should be immediate.

Adam Gutta
Providence

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Three asks: (1) Quickly increasing the minimum wage to \$15/hour. (2) Including tipped workers and domestic workers in the increase. (3) Tying the minimum wage to inflation.

Allen Price
Cranston

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To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my support for bill H-5130, and specifically my support for a rapid move toward increasing the minimum wage in Rhode Island to \$15/hour, tying that wage to inflation, and including tipped workers and domestic workers in the increase.

Research has shown that the best (and really only) way to lift people out of poverty is to give them more money. Research also shows that when people make \$15/hr, they spend more of that money, redistributing it into the community. Additionally, research shows that a \$15/hr minimum wage is in no way devastating to local businesses and in fact acts as a rising tide, lifting all boats.

Too long have we allowed business owners to line their own pockets by artificially holding down wages using false excuses such as ""these jobs are for teenagers who need pocket money"" or ""it would drive the company out of business"" or even ""this kind of work doesn't deserve a living wage"" -- these are terrible justifications that hold little basis in fact. I urge you to consider the research, the successful deployments of a \$15/hr minimum wage in other parts of this country, and the health and well-being of all Rhode Islanders, and vote accordingly.

Thank you for your time,

Christopher Buecheler
Providence