

Feb 23, 2021



Re. S5130 (Increasing the Minimum Wage)

Dear Chairman and committee members,

The RI Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty strongly supports passage of **Bill H5130 which would raise the minimum wage.**

As a coalition of faith leaders, congregation members, service and advocacy organizations across the state who have come together to fight poverty we recognize the critical need to raise the minimum wage. **Rhode Islanders working full time earning the current minimum wage do not make enough to meet basic needs; a single-parent family with two children needs an annual household income of close to \$63,000.**

There has been some anxiety expressed in regards to increasing the minimum wage. Will it negatively impact job creation in our state, harming those it is meant to help? In fact, the answer seems to be no. Analysis conducted by the National Employment Law Project found that the “bulk of rigorous researching examining hundreds of case studies of minimum wage increases at the state and local levels finds that raising the minimum wage boosts incomes for low-paid workers without reducing overall employment or job growth to any significant degree.”¹

Now more than ever we must help working class families. The pandemic has highlighted and magnified the inequality that exists in our society. We cannot wait any longer, we need to raise the minimum wage now! It isn't lost on us that 15 dollars isn't what it used to be, so the longer we wait, the less impact it will have.

Many of our faith traditions speak of the need to care for the laborer and the needy (“If, however, there is a needy person among you, one of your kin in any of your settlements...do not harden your heart and shut your hand against your needy kin. Rather you must open your hand and lend whatever is sufficient to meet the need.”)² Raising Rhode Island's minimum wage would impact 142,000 people, more than one in four workers in our state. In order to support we must increase the minimum wage significantly and develop a long-term strategy to achieve a living wage for all Rhode Islanders.

Thank you for your time, for passing this Bill and. for supporting families in Rhode Island.

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¹ “Employment and Business Effects of Minimum Wage Increases,” September 2015, <http://www.nelp.org/content/uploads/Minimum-Wage-Basics-Business-Effects.pdf>

² Deuteronomy 15: 7-8, 10-11