

Representative Anastasia Williams, Chair

House Committee on Labor

Wednesday, February 24, 2021

### **Support for H-5130 and H-5263, Relating to Minimum Wage**

Chairwoman Williams and members of the House Committee on Labor,

My name is Yuselly Mendoza, I am 29 years old, and a long-time resident of Providence. I've worked in non-profits for the majority of my career beginning in 2015 up to now. While at Rhode Island College, I began working at a non-profit organization as a shelter advocate with a starting hourly wage of \$12.75 an hour. As a college student, I balanced schoolwork while working a low paying job in order to financially support my parents. Both of my parents worked full-time, but did not earn enough to afford all expenses on their own. As homeowners, I watched as they struggled financially to pay bills while making necessary renovations on our home. My parents worried that one day they would lose their home of almost 30 years, a home where they built a foundation for their children and grandchildren. I felt a responsibility to help my family while also having responsibilities of my own to worry about like paying for my school tuition, purchasing expensive books for my classes, etc. A misconception told about minimum wage workers is that we're young people, oftentimes students, with very little financial responsibilities. What this narrative leaves out are the countless young people, like myself, who had to work for very little pay in order to provide for themselves *and* their families. It wasn't a choice, it was a necessity, and one that could have been alleviated with a livable wage.

After graduating with a Bachelor's Degree in Youth Development, my goal was to stay in my current role and work my way up through the organization. After completing my first year, I received a 25 cent raise, bumping me up to \$13.00 an hour. It was my first and final raise at my previous employer. I worked for five consecutive years at that organization without seeing any promotion or progress within my career. I now work at a different nonprofit earning much higher than the minimum wage. If a single individual like myself struggled to live earning less than \$15 an hour, then how does society expect workers with children to do so? The cost of living continues to drastically increase while the minimum wage remains the same. We, the people, demand the minimum wage to be raised up to \$15 an hour. We deserve to be paid substantially more. I support bill H-5130 and H-5263 because we should be raising the minimum wage for *all* working people, including tipped minimum wage workers, domestic workers, and indexing the

wage to match inflation. These things are necessary to ensure that workers do not remain in poverty year after year.

Thank you.

Yuselly Mendoza  
Providence, RI