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RE: H.552/Senate Economic Development Committee
Testimony in favor of a minimum wage increase

I speak as a community member and would like to make five points.

1) At the House public hearing regarding the minimum wage bill, it was said that the solution to low-wage earning is hard work and education. I do not believe education and hard work are necessarily the only fix for the economic lives of low wage earners. While education provided me with a career as a teacher, I have three college-educated children, ages 29-33, whose education has not meant career level wages. Two of them (one of whom recently completed graduate studies) work diligently at barely-above-minimum wage jobs and are often unemployed. A third lives in Burlington, shares rent with 3-4 others, and has two jobs, one at \$12 an hour with benefits. (He will be going to medical school, accruing a sizable debt for the privilege of becoming a high-wage earner.) None of my children can afford to start a family in their current circumstances, circumstances that do not promise to improve soon.

2) I, like many seniors, will benefit from an increase to the minimum wage. Some of us retired earlier than we would have wished and must go back to work to just make ends meet. I worked as a full-time teacher in the state for only ten years; as such, my retirement benefits are minimal. I have not been able to find work that will pay me more than minimum wage. I wish for better compensation for my labors.

3) Even if hard work and education can still, in this day and age, raise up the standard of living of some Vermonters, there will always be a lowest tier of employment. And employers will always be under pressure to provide products and services by the cheapest means possible. I believe that government should exercise its role to protect low-wage earners and guide the market to increase low-wage salaries.

4) Increasing the minimum wage will improve the state economy in a number of ways. By putting more money into the pockets of low wage earners, these Vermonters will be able to buy more and support their local businesses - any raise to the minimum wage comes right back to the local economy. Raising the minimum wage will raise the quality of living for low-wage earners, increasing both their sense of worth and their actual well-being. Further, these better-compensated, healthier Vermonters will become a more productive and more stable workforce.

5) Increasing the minimum wage is a moral decision. The low-wage job will not be eliminated; the

work is necessary, valuable, and must be done by someone. There should be no stigma attached to low-wage work. Low-wage workers contribute vitally to Vermont's economy and to our quality of life; they deserve fair and dignified compensation.

Thank you for your time and attention.