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I'm here today in support of raising the minimum wage in VT to \$15/hr. Phil Scott has said publicly that he will veto this legislation. The governor says that he wants a strong economy, and yet, is against legislation that would do just that. We all want to build a vibrant local economy, help people to provide for themselves, and attract young people to our state. Raising the wage will allow us to do just that.

I have experienced working poverty wages myself at several jobs, both as a fast food worker and as an early childhood educator. I have worked at McDonalds and Walmart for years, for long hours and for low pay - a large corporation that could afford to pay all of its workers a livable wage. I've also worked at the Green Mountain Children Center in Essex Junction. The owners are great people who put their community first. However, like most childcare centers, they pay a minimum wage. Making the minimum wage is embarrassing, and I am struggling. I struggle to cover my bills and rent each month. Not knowing if I can make it through the month with enough money to buy food is very troubling.

I have an intellectual disability. I have personally been underpaid because of this. We have to protect people with disabilities. Like everyone, we want to live independently and with dignity. People working full time should be able to pay their rent, their heating bills, and buy food. People need a livable wage to support themselves and not have to work 2-3 jobs.

Though working Vermonters need a \$15/hr wage now, I find the 6 year term to be a reasonable way forward to pass this bill. The increases each year will allow even small employers to plan and adjust for the yearly incremental increases. We know there are a lot of concerns about the business side of this issue. I urge you to see the human side of this issue.

Things are not all great in the Vermont workforce. My experience and the experiences of thousands of others making low wages in our state needs to be addressed. Vermont can lead the way in showing compassion to its workers - we are, after all Vermont strong.