

From: Annie Wohland [mailto:awohland2000@yahoo.com]
Sent: Wednesday, January 24, 2018 1:11 PM
To: Kayla Dewey
Cc: sirotkin.senate@gmail.com
Subject: Annie Wohland's Testimony on January 23, 2018

Annie Wohland's Testimony on January 23, 2018:

Burlington's Fight for \$15 is a local grassroots initiative that began meeting in Summer 2016 and was inspired to begin in VT based upon Senator Bernie Sanders' presidential policy pitch for \$15 federal livable wage. At that time, Burlington's Fight for \$15 was a small but extremely dedicated group of 3-4 Burlington residents (one of them was from South Burlington) who met on a regular basis. I was particularly drawn to get involved after my incredible experience working for Bernie 2016. Raising the minimum wage resonated with me the most because I knew that it could have a tremendously positive and powerful impact in terms of helping Vermonters in every aspect of their life so they could meet their basic needs and help lift them and their family out of poverty. As with most of us, there are also some people in my own life who I care about that desperately need this raise.

Fight for \$15 worked on drafting language to advise their state representatives to support a increase in the VT minimum wage to \$15 an hour. As the leader of this initiative, my task was to reach out to everyone on the Burlington City Council who were either undecided, unsupportive or opposed, which were about eight City Councilors in total, to take the time to have a conversation with them and to ask for their support of the language to place it on the March 7, 2017 town meeting day ballot as a ballot advisory question to voters. To be completely honest, it was quite the task and at times felt overwhelming to get at least the 7 City Councilors needed to support this resolution, but after a lot of diligent and tireless hard work, Burlington's Fight for \$15 successfully garnered enough support from City Councilors at least a month before their formal City Council vote on January 23rd.

Prior to the City's council's vote on January 23rd, I organized a press conference on the steps of City Hall where myself and many others spoke including some City Councilors. Later that night, it was a pleasure to see that 10 of the City Councilors voted in support of the resolution, besides for Kurt Wright who was opposed and David Hartnett who recused himself.

Fast forward to town meeting day on March 7, 2017, the results showed that about 75% of Burlington voters voted in support of raising the statewide minimum wage to \$15 an hour, which was an overwhelming victory for Burlington's Fight for \$15 grassroots effort and ultimately was intended to send a strong message to Montpelier that this is what Vermonters, not just want, but need.

Fight for \$15 is proud of the work we have done as we think it's important to recognize the work that must first happen on a local level to help draw insight in order to have a real impact on the

state level - ultimately in Montpelier and I look forward to continuing this work at the Statehouse.