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I am here as a representative of Vermont Interfaith Action, an organization of over four dozen affiliated congregations throughout Vermont comprising of more than 5,000 members working to improve the quality of life for all Vermonters, especially our poorest neighbors. Over the past few years the Clergy and Elders Caucus of Vermont Interfaith Action has sought to consider our work under the rubric, *A Movement toward a Moral Economy*. We believe that a moral economy embraces the following principles:

- 1). A moral economy honors the dignity of all people.
- 2). A moral economy values every person's gifts and abilities.
- 3). A moral economy offers all people just rewards and fair wages for their work.
- 4). A moral economy respects and provides for all who are unable to work.
- 5). A moral economy respects and protects the most vulnerable.
- 6). A moral economy respects the earth and its resources, preserving life for future generations.

It is under the third principle, "A moral economy offers all people just rewards and fair wages for their work," that we support the legislation being considered as "An act relating to increasing the minimum wage." Another way of stating the significance of this legislation can be found in the sacred texts, for example from the Holy Quran: "Give full measure and be not among those who cause loss; and weigh with a true balance, and do not deprive people of what is rightfully theirs." - Surah 26:181-183 And of course, the converse is true as well, that a society that demands citizens work for wages that do not provide for basic sustenance in that society is immoral.

But in addition to the high moral aspect of this, allow me to mention a more mundane level as well: Congregations are small businesses and our congregation, The Church of the Good Shepherd in Barre decided a half dozen years ago that \$15 is a fair minimum wage. We currently pay our hourly employees, secretarial and custodial, more than that amount. We do this because it is the right thing to do. But since we do this, our members are also willing to step up and increase their giving to cover this because that is also the right thing to do. This is weighing with a true balance and it is the movement toward a moral economy. I urge you to support this legislation. Thank you.