



Public Testimony
House Labor Committee
Re: Increasing the Minimum Wage
House Bill 5315
March 30, 2017

Submitted by The Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty

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Good afternoon. My name is Emily Jones. I'm speaking on behalf of the Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty, a coalition of diverse religious communities and advocacy partners throughout the state who have come together to fight poverty.

I am testifying today to voice our organization's strong support for an increase to the state's tipped minimum wage.

Specifically, to the point of today's legislation, **we support House Bill 5315, which would increase the tipped minimum wage \$0.50/year, annually**, beginning January 1, 2018, until reaching 2/3 of the state's standard minimum wage rate.

As we seek to ensure that all Rhode Islanders have access to good work with decent wages, it is imperative that we don't let any sector fall behind.

While, in theory, tips and employer contributions are required to make up the difference between the tipped minimum wage and the standard minimum wage, research conducted by the Restaurant Opportunities Center, federally, suggests that **this does not always happen as it should.**¹

Further, an earlier report by the Economic Policy Institute and the Center on Wage and Employment Dynamics, found that **"tipped workers are more than twice as likely (and waiters almost three times as likely) to fall under the federal poverty line."**²

As Rhode Island seeks to reduce poverty, we must pay careful attention to assuring decent wages in *every* sector of the economy.

Thank you to the House Labor Committee for your time considering this important matter and for your public service to Rhode Island.

¹ Restaurant Opportunities Center United, et al, "Tipped Over the Edge: Gender Inequity in the Restaurant Industry," February 2012, http://rocunited.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/ROC_GenderInequity_ES.pdf

² Economic Policy Institute and the Center on Wage and Employment Dynamics, "Waiting for Change: The \$2.13 Federal Subminimum Wage," February 2011, <http://www.epi.org/files/page/-/BriefingPaper297.pdf>