



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT
ONE UNION STATION
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02903
401/351-9400 • 401/351-1758 (FAX)

Testimony Re: H-5371 Relating to Labor – Removing Exemption from Minimum Wage Statute for People Who Work In/About Private Homes

House Labor Committee

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Leanne Barrett, Senior Policy Analyst

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT supports passage of Rep. Felix's bill, H-5371, which would remove a domestic service exemption in state law from the RI minimum wage, so that people who work in and about private homes would be paid at least minimum wage by their employers. We would also support removing exemptions of other categories of people from the minimum wage law, particularly people who work for summer camps.

People who work in and about private homes provide child care to many Rhode Island families, as babysitters, nannies, au pairs, and in licensed family child care homes. As of January 2020, there were 460 licensed family child care homes in Rhode Island and of these about 40% were licensed to serve more than six children and thus required to have an assistant to ensure safety of children.

Summer day camps also provide child care for many Rhode Island families. We believe that most camps in Rhode Island pay at or above the minimum wage, but very little information is available because the state does not license summer camps.

Excluding categories of jobs that are commonly held by women and people of color from state minimum wage laws is recognized as a practice rooted in racism and misogyny.

Thank you for considering legislation to remove these exemptions from the minimum wage law.