



Advocating for women's rights
and opportunities in Connecticut

Labor Committee

Testimony in support of *Senate Bill No. 362, An Act Concerning Equal Pay for Equal Work* and *Bill No. 6187 An Act Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees*

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Good afternoon. My name is Amy Miller, and I am the Program and Public Policy Director at the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund. CWEALF is a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering women, girls, and their families to achieve equal opportunities in their personal and professional lives.

I am here today to urge your support on Bill No. 362, An Act Concerning Equal Pay for Equal Work, and Raised Bill No. 6187, An Act Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees.

For 30 years, CWEALF has advocated for gender equity for women in Connecticut, and we believe that the pay equity legislation will go a long way toward that goal. We also want to ensure that Connecticut employees receive benefits which will both ensure that they can take care of themselves and their families and help create a healthy and productive workplace. We believe that both of these bills make good business sense and enhance the quality of the lives of women and their families in Connecticut.

Bill No. 362 -- Pay Equity

The number of women in the workforce has increased dramatically over the course of 50 years from about 18 million in 1950 to 68 million in 2007. In 5 years, female workers will account for a staggering 76 million jobs. Women account for 46% of the national labor force, while in Connecticut, they account for 51.3%. Yet those who make up more than half of our state's workforce are being deprived of equal pay.

In CT, a woman earns 71 cents for every dollar a man makes. The numbers are lower for women of color. African American women earn about 62 cents and Latina women earn about 57 cents. If we assume that they work for 47 years full-time, a high school female graduate would lose \$700,000 in wages, while a college graduate would lose about \$1.2 million.

Both gender discrimination and other circumstances cause this pay inequity. Female-dominated fields, including nursing and teaching, are typically undervalued. Even in female-dominated occupations, male nurses and teachers earn 10% more than female

nurses and teachers. There also seems to be a penalty against motherhood in the work force. Mothers are 44% less likely to be hired than non-mothers, while single mothers earn only 56 to 66 cents for every dollar a man makes. Because they tend to be caregivers, women end up taking an average of 13 years out of the workforce.

With this legislation, Connecticut women will receive broad protection against workplace discrimination and be able to file state discrimination cases rather than federal cases. Closing the wage gap between men and women will also help the increasing number of CT families headed by a woman. Equal pay is crucial to these families.

“If we stay focused, as Lilly (Ledbetter) did, and keep standing for what’s right, as Lilly did, we will close that pay gap and ensure that our daughters have the same rights, the same chances, and the same freedom to pursue their dreams as our sons.” – President Barack Obama

Raised Bill No. 6187 -- Paid Sick Days

Raised Bill No. 6187, An Act Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees, would allow Connecticut workers at companies of 50 employees or more to take a paid day off to help recover from their illness or care for the illness of their children. While we strongly support the goals of this legislation, we would like to see this bill extended to businesses with 25 or more employees to ensure that food-service employees and other low-paid workers in the state get paid sick days. For example, only 20% of food service workers currently have paid sick leave.

According to a study by the Institute for Women’s Policy Research, almost half of all American workers lack paid sick days. Even more employees do not have paid sick days to take care of a sick child. Of Connecticut’s estimated 630,000 employees, about 40% do not get paid sick days. This means that these workers are left with the choice of staying home to take care of their or their child’s illness without pay or going to work sick. For many, the trouble of losing a day’s pay or the fear of losing their job forces them to go to work. Low-wage workers suffer the most, with more than 75% of low wage workers in Connecticut not having paid sick leave.

Workers showing up sick for work or students going to school sick pose serious problems. Their illnesses create a public health hazard because the sick employees or students are likely to spread illness or disease to other workers and students. Sick workers who show up to their jobs are more likely to suffer from their illness longer, and their spreading illnesses in the workplace results in increased employee work absences.

Employers who oppose this measure argue that mandating paid sick leave will incur great costs to the business and thus their businesses will suffer. However, studies show that the benefits of paid sick leave for businesses and employers outweigh the costs. A 2007 study by the Society for Human Resources Management shows that it costs U.S. employers \$118 billion a year when workers take paid sick leave, compared to \$180 billion when workers show up to work sick.

Businesses that provide paid sick leave also benefit from better productivity. Lost productivity was significantly higher when employees went to work sick than from missed work days due to illness. Businesses also benefit from productivity gains through better job satisfaction and loyalty and decreased health care dollars spent due to sickness or the sickness of family members.

Healthier workers are also beneficial for the economy and society in general. According to the National Partnership for Women and Families, if workers were provided with 7 paid sick days a year, our national economy would save a net \$8.2 billion per year. Some workers, especially low-wage workers and workers with families living under the poverty line, who lose wages or their jobs to take unpaid or unauthorized sick leave, may end up on unemployment, welfare, or other public assistance programs. Providing paid sick days will prevent these and more families from relying on these programs.

Businesses that cry out against this bill argue that this is not the right time to be imposing further measures on their already suffering conditions. But they and the State of CT must realize that, as facts and figures show, now is exactly the best time to provide the employees of Connecticut with paid sick leave because it pays to invest in people.

I also would like to address Bill No. 222, An Act Concerning the Tip Credit. This bill would increase the amount of tips that certain employees, including restaurant workers, would

