

March 11, 2014

Senator Gary Holder- Winfield
Rep. Peter Tercyak
Labor and Public Employees Committee
Connecticut General Assembly
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06605

Dear Senator Gary Holder- Winfield,

I am submitting a written testimony in support of HB 5527 that is to be proposed at the public hearing planned in Bridgeport on March 13, 2014.

I am a long time domestic worker and I'm also currently a social work undergrad at Sacred Heart University and as part of the program I've been placed with the Brazilian Immigrant Center and it's through this program that I've come to learn more about domestic workers and their struggle for a voice across the nation but more specifically here in Connecticut.

Domestic workers are defined as individuals who work within their employer's home and individuals are responsible for a number of activities ranging from childcare to housekeeping. Through research I've come to understand that in the United States alone there is an estimated 2.5 million domestic workers. Sadly, despite all of their hard work and time they have been denied the rights that most employees benefit from such as workers compensation, sick time, vacation, overtime and even sexual harassment protections. These people deserve to have a voice and deserve to be represented.

For a nation that prides itself on equality and having a voice these individuals have been virtually left out. Thus far in the United States there are only three states namely New York, California and Hawaii that have a Bill of Rights for domestic workers. The mission here is to give a voice to those that are unheard. Domestic workers, both documented and undocumented, serve as a backbone in our country. For that reason we need to support them. Everyone no matter immigrant status, job, race, or background deserves the same dignity and respect. That being the case we need to support them.

This bill is rooted in principles of compassion and dignity and by supporting HB 5527 you'll make it possible for many injustices to be addressed. This bill address basic exclusions confronting domestic workers as a class of workers and guarantee some basic minimum rights that almost all other workers have here in our state. This Bill of Rights will ensure that all domestic workers receive minimum wage and overtime and have a written agreement that outlines their duties as well as their rate of pay. Domestic workers

will have protections from on-the-job injuries by extending workers compensation benefits to them. They will also have increased protections in cases of sexual harassment and discrimination. Live-in domestic workers will receive notice of termination so that they do not become homeless.

I ask that you and each of your members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee to support HB 5527.

Warmest Regards,

Gabrielle Abouzeide

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