

March 11, 2014

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

RE: H.B. 5527 – Domestic Worker Bill of Rights

Dear Sen. Holder-Winfield and Rep. Tercyak:

On March 8, 2014, I had the pleasure of meeting eleven Polish women who are domestic workers and residents of New Britain. Labor attorney Mariusz Kurzyna convened a meeting these women at the Polish American Foundation. Please find attached a translation of a testimony by Ms. Alfreda Adamczyk, a homecare worker, who is a resident of New Britain. Ms. Adamczyk's phone number is (860) 518-6094. Ms. Natalia Kolakowska, a university student interested in justice issues facing women workers, translated the testimony.

"I worked for a week in 2009. Agnieszka from the agency offered me the job. When she described the job to me, she said that I would be working with a person who had problems with mobility, some problems with her legs, but was able to move around at times. As it turned out, when I arrived at the home, the client was completely immobile and had to be moved around in a wheelchair. The home was not wheelchair accessible. The client insisted on being moved around all over the place despite the fact that there was no room to navigate the chair. It is a good thing that I am slim and could squeeze in tight places to push and pull the wheelchair through. But all of this required lots of effort and strength, especially for a person of my stature. After three days, I spoke to the agent, Agnieszka, and told her that I could not do it anymore, that I will not take the job because it is too hard for me. My leg hurt, above my ankle. I told Agnieszka. Later I felt pain in my knee. I ignored the pain when I was at work because I was taking care of the client. When I got home, I called the doctor to schedule an appointment but he did not have anything available until Friday. When I talked to Agnieszka, she referred me to a back specialist. I couldn't believe it. Why did she give me the number to a doctor who specializes in back problems when she knew that it was my leg—my knee—that hurt? I got an MRI on my knee. I had to get surgery. Later, Agnieszka accused me of lying. She told me that I could call Worker's Compensation and explain everything but she said that I lied about my injury because I said that it was ankle that hurt, not my knee. After that, the agency did not want to have any contact with me. They said that I would never get a job again because I lied. I had to go to rehabilitation for two months after the surgery. I could not work. My claim was denied. All I got was a \$20 credit for pills for my pain. I had to pay for the surgery out of my own pocket."

Please consider this testimony as evidence of the need for basic minimum protections like workers compensation for all domestic workers in Connecticut. I observed the pain and humiliation Ms. Adamczyk must have experienced as she recounted her story. Ms. Adamczyk cried at one point in telling her story among her peers. No worker should have to suffer the humiliation of being called a liar, let alone bear the costs of injury associated with performing her job duties.

Please support H.B. 5527 so that other domestic workers in Connecticut do not have to suffer as Ms. Adamczyk has.

Sincerely,

Meghan Vesel
Deputy Director
Brazilian Immigrant Center
768 Fairfield Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06604
(404)583-1682
meghanvesel@global.t-bird.edu

cc: Mariusz Kurzyna
Natalia Kolakowska