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Testimony of
The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
Before the
Labor and Public Employees Committee
March 13, 2014

Re: H.B. 5527, AAC A Domestic Worker's Bill of Rights

Senators Holder-Winfield and Markley, Representatives Tercyak and Smith, and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) regarding H.B. 5527, AAC A Domestic Worker's Bill of Rights, which will establish certain requirements for the employment of domestic workers in the state. It also would establish a task force, with PCSW designated as a statutory member, to study and make recommendations for legislative initiatives to provide outreach and education services to domestic workers in the state.

Impact on CT Women:

- In Connecticut, there are approximately 40,000 domestic workers who serve as housekeepers, nannies, and caregivers in private homes.¹
- In 2013, the International Institute of Connecticut served 54 human trafficking clients, and 11 of those were in domestic labor trafficking situations (10 female and 1 male).²
- In 2012, the National Human Trafficking Resource Center identified 14 potential human trafficking matters in Connecticut, including two domestic worker cases.³

The role of domestic workers, a female-dominated profession, is essential to Connecticut as it enables others to participate in the workforce. Without these domestic workers many would be forced to forgo their own jobs to address their household needs, the result being that the well-being of many Connecticut families and the economy as a whole would suffer.

¹ Brazilian Immigrant Center for All (March 2014). Available at <domesticworkers.org>.

² International Institute of Connecticut (March 4, 2014).

³ National Human Trafficking Resource Center (2012), Data Breakdown: Connecticut State Report.

However, despite the importance of their work, domestic workers have historically received wages well below the poverty line and continue to be excluded from some of the most fundamental labor protections other workers in Connecticut enjoy. This bill would provide equal opportunity to domestic workers by providing: coverage of domestic workers under state minimum wage and overtime law, protection for on-the-job injuries, protection from harassment and discrimination, and industry-specific workplace protections.

This bill would also provide additional protections against human trafficking, as recommended by some members of the Trafficking in Persons Council. Since domestic workers are primarily immigrant women, it is also a prime area for human trafficking. Additional monitoring and surveillance by governmental entities will make it possible to detect and prevent human trafficking more often.

PCSW urges passage of this bill – not only will it provide equality for domestic workers but it will also assist human trafficking victims. We look forward to working with you to address this important issue. Thank you for your consideration.