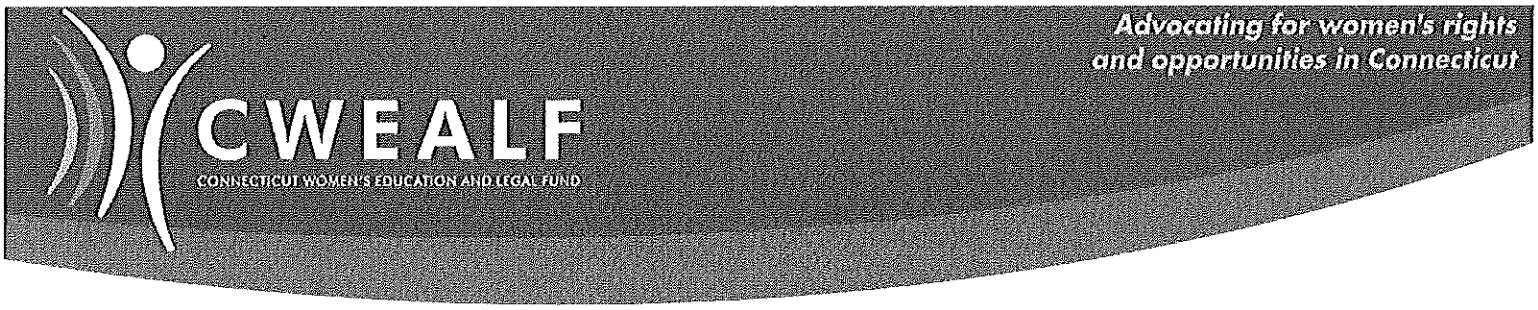

Human Services Committee

RB 1044: An Act Concerning the Recoupment of State Costs Attributable to Low Wage Employees

Dr. Alice Pritchard, Executive Director, Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund

March 12, 2015

My name is Dr. Alice Pritchard and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF). CWEALF is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to empowering women, girls and their families to achieve equal opportunities in their personal and professional lives.

For the past 40 years, CWEALF has been working to expand employment opportunities for women. We do this by promoting education and training for low skilled adults and youth in hopes of stopping the cycle of poverty and promoting careers and career advancement. With two out of three minimum wage earners being women, we know they encounter challenges in meeting the basic human needs of their families. These low wages are often the only source of income in women's families.

RB 1044 would impose a fee on large employers who pay low wages which will be redirected to support healthcare and childcare costs for working families who cannot afford or must rely on the state to afford these services. The legislation directs the resources to the Department of Social Services to support and improve services for the elderly and disabled and to the Office of Early Childhood to increase access to childcare programs.

For many families, childcare also presents a significant barrier to employment. According to United Way's ALICE Report, the average cost of attending a full-time, accredited childcare center in Connecticut is $1,893 per month ($1,038 per month for an infant and $855 per month for a four year old). Childcare for two children is by far the greatest expense and accounts for 28 percent of United Way's Household Survival Budget.

CWEALF understands the difficult balance that women face in trying to earn enough money to support their families. This bill recognizes that with low wages they will continue to be dependent on the state government to meet their needs. This bill raises one way for the state to ensure they have the resources to meet the needs of families while at the same time holding employers accountable for paying low wages and no benefits.

In closing, on behalf of CWEALF, I hope that you consider these legislative solutions to problems that employees, and especially female employees, face in the workforce on a daily basis. Thank you for your time and for allowing me to submit testimony today.