



March 5, 2015

To Senator Edwin A. Gomes, Representative Peter A. Tercyak and Members of the General Assembly Committee on Labor and Public Employees:

The Connecticut Center for a New Economy supports House Bill 6877, AN ACT CONCERNING A MINIMUM WORK WEEK FOR PERSONS PERFORMING JANITORIAL WORK.

In Connecticut the median household net worth for white families is more than sixty times higher than that for families of color (Source: Corporation for Enterprise Development, 2009-2010 Assets & Opportunity Scorecard). This extreme racial wealth divide became more severe during the recent economic recession, when families of color were more likely to lose their homes, their primary asset, to foreclosure than white families. In addition, median household income for white families in Connecticut is nearly double that for African American and Latino families (Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2013). Most people who perform janitorial work in Connecticut and who face the double difficulty of low wages and too few work hours are people of color. One way, therefore, to start to address the racial disparity in access to economic opportunity in Connecticut is to pass HB 6877.

We almost take for granted in this state that people who clean buildings will work two or three jobs. We seldom stop to recognize, however, the toll on families when work is organized this way. We don't recognize that those with the lowest wages have the highest transportation costs, spend the most time commuting, are the least likely to qualify for employer-sponsored benefits (because they meet no single employer's hour threshold), are the most vulnerable to termination and, most important, are the least likely to be able to reliably be present for their children. During this crazy winter weather it is important to stop and think about those who are expected to show up to clean buildings at times incompatible with public transportation for limited hours of work and low wages.

According to the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women Basic Economic Security Study, a family of four living in one of Connecticut's urban centers needs \$82,776 just to make ends meet without public assistance. Even the higher paid among janitors in Connecticut would need to work 88 hours a week to take care of that family of 4. It is not too much to expect a job to provide 30 hours, as HB 6877 requires. This bill doesn't eliminate all of the root causes of poverty, but it eliminates one of them.

Submitted by Renae Reese, Executive Director, CCNE, 860-280-7320,
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The Connecticut Center for a New Economy (CCNE) promotes economic, social and racial justice for Connecticut's unemployed and working people.

Workers Statement: Martha Duque
HB 6877: AN ACT CONCERNING A MINIMUM WORK WEEK FOR PERSONS PERFORMING
JANITORIAL WORK

Hello members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Martha Duque and I've been working as a cleaner at New Britain's Courthouse for the past 2 years.

I've always done this work with pride but I have to say, life is not easy for part-time cleaners. There is not enough money to pay for all the family needs. Paying for healthcare alone is a struggle. We used to have to pay \$600 every month to cover my family.

Juggling bills is no fun, that's why I'm very thankful for being able to start working full time. It's only 5 hours more but it makes a big difference. The extra money always helps to pay groceries and this and that bill. The benefits have been a lifesaver for us too. By having employer paid family healthcare we no longer have to pay \$600 every month to keep our family covered. It has been a blessing. But it shouldn't have to come to luck. Everyone should be able to make ends meet and have enough hours to pay the bills. That's why I encourage you to support the Better Jobs Act in CT. Our state can do it.