



State of Connecticut
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES
Central Office ~ 25 Sigourney Street, Hartford, CT 06106
Promoting Equality and Justice for all People

Testimony to the Labor and Public Employees Committee

SB 106, An Act Concerning Retaliation Against Immigrant Workers

March 5, 2015

The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities **SUPPORTS** SB 106, An Act Concerning Retaliation Against Immigrant Workers.

This bill would prohibit employers from taking adverse immigration-related actions against employees who exercise their rights that exist under Connecticut labor laws. This would include contacting immigration authorities if an employee complains to the Department of Labor about not receiving at least minimum wage, requesting different documentation than that authorized by federal law, or threatening to file a false police report.

Connecticut law already protects employees who are discriminated against because of their race, color, ancestry or national origin. This bill would add additional protections for individuals who are threatened because of their immigrant status. Immigrant workers are already vulnerable to abuse – sexual harassment, non-payment of wages or overtime wages, assignment to particularly dangerous jobs without proper protective gear etc., and are more easily exploited because of their fear of being separated from families and/or of deportation.

If employers know that employees are working illegally, the employers are equally liable for violating the law and should not be permitted to exploit their employees. The law would add a rebuttable presumption that adverse actions taken within 90 days of an employee exercising his or her rights is discriminatory and would allow the employee to obtain relief from the discriminatory. It would also provide for fines to the employer violating the law. All of these protections are necessary and would fill a critical gap in existing law.

Connecticut has laws to protect its most vulnerable employees for a reason – they are most likely to be taken advantage of by unscrupulous employers. Employees in the State of Connecticut deserve better treatment. As a civil rights bill, S.B. 106 would further the mission of the Commission – to eliminate discrimination through civil and human rights law enforcement and to establish equal opportunity and justice for all persons within the state. For these reasons, the Commission urges the Committee to favorably report this bill.