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Committee on Labor and Public Employees  
Public Hearing  
3/5/2015

Testimony On  
Senate Bill 106  
An Act Concerning Retaliation Against Immigrant Workers

The Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference urges this committee to support S.B. 106, *An Act Concerning Retaliation Against Immigrant Workers*. This legislation is aimed at insuring that immigrant employees receive a legal wage and have recourse to other legal benefits and protections established by law for all employees within the State of Connecticut. S.B. 106 attempts to guarantee that these rights can be exercised by immigrant employees free of the fear of reprisal, either through loss of employment or threats relating to their immigration status. Catholic social teaching holds that all workers, immigrant and non-immigrant, have a right to employment, to decent and fair wages, and to safe working conditions. Additionally, immigrant and non-immigrant workers should be treated equally and fairly based on their labor. This legislation is an attempt to secure those rights.

All too often we hear of immigrant employees being exploited through the payment of low wages, harsh working conditions and lack of benefits. Any complaints about these conditions are met with threats against their immigration status and possible deportation. Senate Bill 106 extends protections to immigrant workers in their efforts to exercise their rights and penalizes employers for violating these rights. This legislation is long overdue in Connecticut. Our state takes pride in providing and protecting the rights of its people who work within its borders. The Labor and Public Employees Committee should pass Senate Bill 106 to insure these rights and protections cover all workers, including immigrant workers, within our state.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael C. Culhane', written over a horizontal line.

Michael C. Culhane  
Executive Director

SB 1035: An Act Concerning Workplace Bill  
March 5, 2015

I'm here today as a self-employed business woman. I have a long history in business working at the executive level and I also have been the victim of a workplace bully. She was verbally abusive, threw hissy fits, slammed things, moved computer files so I couldn't get work done, lied, and changed my work. Our boss promised he would deal with her, asked me to be patient, told me she had "issues", but ultimately turned out to be as afraid of her as everyone else and allowed the bullying to continue and escalate. Fortunately for me I had the financial wherewithal to leave the job. I can't provide specifics because there was a financial settlement and I agreed not to discuss it. However I left behind office staff who do not have the financial option to leave and who continue to suffer. One of the bully's favorite targets was a woman that she would scream at, telling her she was stupid and useless. She delighted in terrorizing her. The woman was so beaten and defeated by the bully that she came to believe it was all her fault. Unlike sexual harassment, bullying is all inclusive, committed by people across all lines to all kinds of targets. 68% of female bullies target women, compared to 32% of the male bullies.

When I left that job I was shocked to find that bullying is legal. While we work to stop the awful effects of bullying in schools, we have no protection in the workforce. We look to you to remedy this travesty. As a result of my experience I joined in support of the Healthy Workplace Bill authored by David Yamada.

Bullying is not only morally wrong, it's bad for business. Bullies drive away good employees and damage the ones that remain, which impacts productivity. There is also the potential for someone who has been repeatedly bullied to lash out and commit workplace violence.

We need a bill- but not this bill. A bad bill is worse than no bill at all. While I admire enthusiasm, we need a bill that was developed based on expertise, not just enthusiasm. Instead of no bill, or this bad bill, let's make a good bill.

Here's what's wrong with this bill, and how it can be improved:

1. The language that defines "abuse" isn't effective. Use language that is agreed upon by psychologists and experts in the field.
2. While training as defined in SB 1035 is an appropriate start, training alone is not a remedy for bullying victims.
3. The politically appointed board recommended in SB 1035 is not comprised of experts who actually know anything about bullying. Even if the board were to be composed of experts, they have no ability to help the targets and would cost state taxpayers money. Our Healthy Workplace Bill is budget-neutral.

Please revise this bill against the model of Davis Yamada's bill so that it doesn't just intend to help targets- it truly does. CT Healthy Workplace advocates have sent the committee a copy of the HWB under separate cover.

Mary Beth Nelsen, Co-Coordinator, CT Healthy Workplace  
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