



"There are many paths approaching the truth that unites us"

The Unitarian Society of Hartford

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Testimony in favor of S.B. 446, Domestic Worker Bill of Rights 2/16/15

As a Unitarian Universalist minister and domestic employer, I am wholly in favor of a Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights that would ensure basic labor protections and human rights for nannies, housecleaners, personal attendants, and other domestic workers. I serve as Co-Minister of the Unitarian Society of Hartford, and I am a member of Hand in Hand, the Domestic Employers Network.

My partner and I are parents of a toddler who relies on dedicated childcare providers in our home to allow us to do our job. My brother, who has Down Syndrome, relies on personal attendants to allow him to live independently. Many of my congregants, especially our seniors, employ attendants, housecleaners, and other in-home support.

As Unitarian Universalists, we are called to respect the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and we all want to be fair employers – our faith, our values, and our conscience call us to it. But what is fair? There are no clear standards to follow.

Here are two examples:

First, due to a doorbell failure (because sometimes, it really is that simple and ridiculous!), one of our childcare providers waited outside our door for 30 minutes before leaving. By the time we realized what had happened, she was unable to return. My partner and I (we both work for the Unitarian Society of Hartford) had an important board meeting to get to, and we were incredibly grateful and lucky that another childcare provider was able to come cover for us on just a few minutes notice. These two providers are not only loving and trustworthy with our child, but they are incredibly dedicated as well. *Should we pay the provider who came and tried to do her job, but we didn't answer? Should we pay extra to the one who came on 5 minutes notice?*

Second, my brother recently hurt himself and needed to go to the hospital. His staff could not reach my parents and I was in California, so he took my brother to the hospital and waited with him for a couple extra hours until my parents were able to come so he could go home to his family and his own young children. Knowing I could do nothing from so far away, I was so relieved to know that my brother had someone with him who he knows and loves and whom we all trust. Again and again, my brother's staff bend over backwards to help out. As a family, we rely on them to give the rest of us the freedom to attend to the rest of our lives, knowing that my brother has what he needs to be independent with his staff. *What is fair compensation and overtime for my brother's staff?*

What is fair compensation for each of these providers? What does it mean to be fair and respectful and appreciative of our dedicated providers? How much sick time is fair to pay when they need to cancel to keep their germs to themselves? What about when weather gets in the way of our plans, as it has so often lately – then what is fair compensation?

We need a Domestic Worker Bill of Rights in Connecticut to provide clear, fair, and just answers to these questions. We need these for those of us who *want* to do the right thing and don't know how, and we need it for those who might be too busy or stressed or careless to be thinking about treating their employees fairly.

I urge you to work towards the passage of such a bill.