

New Haven Peoples Center

37 Howe Street, New Haven, Connecticut 06511

Testimony to the Labor and Public Employees Committee February 17, 2015

Joelle Fishman, Coordinator, New Haven Peoples Center

Last March the Peoples Center delivered testimony to the Labor and Public Employees Committee hearing in Bridgeport in support of a domestic workers bill of rights. Last session the decision was to establish a study. Therefore, I would like to re-submit the remarks made last year as part of your current deliberations.

The New Haven Peoples Center is an all-volunteer community meeting place whose constituency includes many workers who are excluded in one way or another from full protection under labor law.

We are aware of the difficult conditions that domestic workers are subjected to including hours worked and health and safety, among many others.

The story of one of our participants who could not be here today is representative of all 40,000 domestic workers in our state who are not covered by labor law.

This particular woman is a home care giver, and an immigrant from the African continent. She covers several homes each day and has to take many buses to get to widespread locations and perform her work. At the end of the day she is rushing back home to take care of her own family. If she has a grievance or a suggestion to better organize the workload there is no standard that she can refer to.

It is wrong that she and all of the 40,000 domestic workers in our state, are denied the same rights under labor law as any other worker. It is time to right this wrong.

Our state has taken important steps recently with the organization of home child care providers and home health care workers. Our state is considering a raise in the minimum wage to \$10.10. The State Legislature is also being asked to end the exclusion of tipped workers to the wage raise.

Let Connecticut step forward once again, with the domestic workers bill of rights. As has been said, the bill of rights will be a benefit to the domestic workers, to their employers, and to the Connecticut economy. Providing standards to guarantee a stable workforce, work guidelines and improved health and well being is a win-win situation for the workers and the families they serve.

Those who have brought the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights forward deserve a lot of appreciation and support for helping to make Connecticut better for everyone.

We also urge the committee to take seriously the proposal that would protect immigrant workers from unfair retaliation for exercising their rights at the workplace. If the rights of these vulnerable workers, who are suffering widespread abuse of wages and hours, are not protected, then the rights of all workers are weakened.

Thank you.