February 16, 2015[1]

Sen. Gary Winfield
Rep. Peter Tercyak
Labor and Public Employees Committee
Legislative Office Building
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06606

Dear Senator Winfield, Rep Tercyak, and Esteemed Members of the Committee, Good Morning

Ladies and Gentlemen, my name is Maria Lima Rodriguez. I am a domestic worker. I worked as a house cleaning helper. In Brazil, I studied law for 4 years. I arrived in this country 8 years ago in search of better conditions for my professional training and that of my kids.

In my first week, I began working the only job that required nothing beyond physical labor. I cleaned people's homes. My employer, the other woman who cleaned with me, was what it called the "schedule owner". Many Brazilian women come here and have to buy houses, or buy a house schedule from other Brazilian women, sometimes for as much as three months worth of income.

I worked long years under exploitation, given no respect, and abused because of my language impairment. When I started cleaning, I would work 9 hours per day earning $3.33 per hour. I stopped working for that woman. I could not accept, and looked for another job thinking it would be different. I was naive. At my new job, I worked every week from 7:00 to 4:00, cleaning 3 to 4 houses, earning $5.67 per hour.

This was repeated throughout my experience as a domestic worker in this country, always changing jobs when my body could not take it anymore. On top of the exploitation of my wages I also suffered from being overworked. I found in the United States something I did not expect. Such a well respected country could not possibly allow for such deplorable work conditions for its domestic workers. I cried every night when I came home, my body ached, and I lacked the strength to get up and eat...going to sleep with the same hunger I felt through the day. At work, I was never even given water to drink.

Thank you for listening to my story. I urge you to pass S.B. 446- An Act Concerning a Domestic Worker Bill of Rights.

Sincerely,

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