

2-17-2015

Testimony of Stacey Zimmerman SEIU CT State Council

Support

SB 446 An Act Concerning the Definition of the Term "Domestic Worker"

HB 5858 An Act Providing Funding to the CT Retirement Security Board

Chairman Tercyak and Winfield distinguished members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify here today. My name is Stacey Zimmerman; I am here today representing the Service Employees International Union Connecticut State Council the state's largest labor union with over 65,000 members.

SEIU strongly supports SB 446 An Act Concerning the Definition of the Term "Domestic Worker". SEIU supported the passage of Special Act 14-17 last year which created a task force to study the issues faced by CT's domestic workforce and how to modernize and refresh our labor laws to recognize the vital work provided in a "domestic" setting.

Due to the unregulated nature of this work there is no official number of these workers but estimates are that 2.5 million people in this country would fall under the "domestic worker" category with potentially 60,000 in CT the vast majority being women.

This is an unregulated industry that was intentionally excluded from coverage by federal labor laws, including the Fair Labor Standards Act, National Labor Relations Act, Family Medical Leave Act, and the Occupational Safety and Health Act. This is the industry that time forgot; sadly in 2015 the labor law governing this industry is based on 19th century values and ethics. We can and must bring this hidden workforce out of the shadows and into the modern age that values a fair days pay for a fair days work.

We have the opportunity to protect domestic workers' basic workplace rights, including safe and healthy working conditions, meal and rest breaks, unemployment benefits, sick time to care for themselves and their families, and freedom from discrimination and sexual harassment.

SEIU is a strong supporter of modernizing our laws to reflect the work the people do and giving them the dignity they deserve.

SEIU strongly supports HB 5858 An Act Providing Funding to the CT Retirement Security Board.

Although this bill will not be a panacea for the looming retirement security crisis it is a huge step forward in renewing the social contract that was begun with the implementation of Social Security and the establishment by labor organizations and corporations to offer defined benefit pensions.

Sadly the social compact that was established from the WWII era is quickly eroding if not gone already. The time of working hard and knowing your retirement security was assured is over. Corporate America and large financial institutions have made a switch to unsecured 401k style retirement plans or nothing

at all has put our seniors at risk of spending their golden years living in poverty and hurting the economy as a whole.

The Shift Away from Defined-Benefit Plans Is Having Disastrous Effect on Our Economy and the Retirement Prospects of Workers

- An analysis by the Social Security Administration found that the shift on balance would produce “more losers than winners” as average family retirement incomes would decline. Their projections show that 26 percent of last-wave of baby boomers would have lower family incomes at age 67 due to the switch to defined-contribution plans by many employers.
- According to the National Institute on Retirement Security, each dollar paid out in pension benefits supports \$1.34 in total economic activity in Connecticut. Less retirement income = less economic activity in the state.

Years ago Joe Glazer wrote a folk song that asked a question “Too old to work but too young to die. Who will take care of you how’ll you get by, When you’re too old to work and you’re too young to die.” Connecticut has an opportunity to answer this question and setup a retirement plan that is secure, that will follow your work and give a piece of mind to its residents as they age into retirement age. We ask you to support HB 5858.