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INTERNATIONAL UNION, UNITED AUTOMOBILE, AEROSPACE & AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENT WORKERS OF AMERICA-UAW

GARY CASTEEL, Secretary-Treasurer

Testimony Supporting

February 17, 2015

SB446 AAC the Definition of the Term "Domestic Worker"

HB5858 AA Providing Funding to the CT Retirement Security Board

UAW Region 9A - Julie Kushner, Director, Beverley Brakeman, Political Representative

Senator Winfield, Representative Tercyak and Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee, UAW Region 9A stands strongly in support of SB446 and HB5858. We urge members of this committee to stand with us in support of these two important measures designed to help working, middle class people and their families.

SB446

Last year, the UAW was very involved in passing Special Act 14-17 which created a task force to look at the issues faced by the state's domestic workers and make recommendations to the legislature on how to improve their work environment.

Nationwide, there are approximately 2.5 million domestic workers, of those about 60,000 reside in Connecticut. Domestic workers are largely women, often immigrants, who work for families doing childcare and/or household duties. Due to the nature of their work and the lack of rights and protections afforded the state's traditional workforce, these workers tend to be highly isolated, subject to round the clock hours and physically demanding work, experience a high degree of mistreatment and abuse at the hands of their "employers," and have almost no separation between their work and personal lives.

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. Yet, it is still a "real job" that because of the lack of regulation leaves these workers extremely vulnerable to mistreatment and abuse.

We urge this committee to support a bill that establishes labor standards that 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. This bill should provide domestic workers with safe and dignified work environments and employers with clear guidelines on their responsibilities that will bring domestic workers out of the shadows.

HB5858

Last year, the legislature recognized the importance of developing a state-administered retirement plan for private sector workers. It is imperative that this year we ensure that the Board receives the funding necessary to do a thorough study.

We have a retirement crisis in this country and in this state. A March 2013 analysis by the National Institute for Retirement Security ranked all states on the financial security of their aging population. Judging on three criteria: anticipated retirement income; major retirement costs like housing and healthcare; and labor market conditions for older workers; Connecticut had the second largest decline in financial security from 2000 to 2012.

Far too often, working people are laid off early in their careers, have to leave the workforce for health or other issues and are unable to achieve the retirement security they need. If funded, this Board would be able to study ways to provide the hundreds of thousands of CT workers who have no access to an employer-sponsored retirement plan with a low-cost, high rate-of-return retirement savings option. We urge this committee's support of this important proposal.

Thank you.

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