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**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 19<sup>th</sup> 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