# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

*ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN AFFAIRS COMMISSION*

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Alok Bhatt

Tuesday, February 19, 2015

Dear Chairman Tercyak, Chairman Winfield, and distinguished members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Alok Bhatt. I serve as Legislative Analyst for the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission (APAAC/the Commission). The Connecticut General Assembly established APAAC in 2008 to engage and advocate for our state's Asian Pacific American (APA) population. This population consists of peoples originating from over 62 countries, who speak more than 100 distinct languages and dialects.

In supporting APA women, and all women facing barriers to basic labor rights, APAAC writes in strong support of SB 446: An Act Concerning the Definition of the Term "Domestic Worker". The Commission supported a similar concept during the 2013 regular session, and will continue to promote policy that positively impacts the APA community in Connecticut.

Currently, little data exists on the demographics of domestic workers in Connecticut. The Connecticut Department of Labor estimates there are approximately 3,500 domestic workers in Connecticut, nearly all immigrants and women of color[1]. Globally, more than 53,000,000 domestic workers provide a variety of personal and home care services, often for low wages, long hours, and minimal legal protection[2]. Even in the United States, our Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) covers only public and private sector employees[3]. Informal employees, including care providers who work up to 24-hour shifts, remain excluded from basic labor rights, such as minimum wage and paid sick leave.

The Commission believes a clear statement of rights and responsibilities, fair wages, paid leave, and other benefits contribute to a sustainable industry model. By respecting the dignity of home and personal care providers, fostering a safe work environment, and reducing turnover, a Domestic Workers Bill of Rights will culminate in positive changes for an important yet overlooked workforce.

Furthermore, the Commission stands behind the rights of domestic

[1] http://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmi/wages/naics2013.asp#Social
[2] http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/domestic-workers/lang--en/index.htm
[3] http://www.dol.gov/whd/flsa/

workers to file complaints with the Labor Commissioner without fear of retaliation. Worldwide, domestic workers have reported exploitative treatment such as verbal, physical, and even sexual abuse, confinement, nonpayment, and derisory housing conditions[4]. We cannot allow these workers to remain so vulnerable any longer. Connecticut must commit to protecting domestic workers as it does public and private sector employees. We must enable these workers to exercise their human rights, while charging employers to honor the same.

In uplifting domestic workers, many of whom are APAs, from an institutionalized underclass, APAAC expresses strong support for a Domestic Workers Bill of Rights which will bring Connecticut in line with the international community of industrialized nations, as well as afford necessary protections to those who work to make our lives and homes comfortable.

The Commission greatly appreciates your time and consideration of this significant matter.

Sincerely,

Alok Bhatt
*Legislative Analyst,* Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission

[4] http://www.antislavery.org/english/slavery_today/child_domestic_work.aspx

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