



Over 40 years advocating for the New Haven community.
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Testimony in support of:

Senate Bill 106, *An Act Concerning Retaliation Against Immigrant Workers*

Senate Bill 914, *An Act Concerning An Employer's Failure To Pay Wages*

Senate Bill 1037, *An Act Concerning Employee Liens Against Employers For Unpaid Wages*

Co-Chairs Gomes and Tercyak, and Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee:

Wage theft is a serious issue that has plagued workers for generations, especially in industries that hire low-wage and immigrant workers. This is a problem even in a city like New Haven, which is seen as welcoming and immigrant friendly. In recent years, we have seen an increase in workers that are not paid overtime, are not paid minimum wage, receive infrequent pay and are misclassified by their employers in order to rob them of their rightly earned wages. One of the most infamous cases from New Haven is the case of Gourmet Heaven, which resulted in the eventual arrest of its owner, who had been paying workers below the minimum wage for years.

While community advocates continue to raise the alarm in matters relating to wage theft and other labor abuses, the needs far outweigh the resources. We also understand that the Department of Labor is understaffed, thus making investigations long and sometimes nearly impossible. Furthermore, filing a complaint is even more unlikely for an undocumented worker because they might fear retaliation.

Our state must do more to protect workers in these situations. We believe these three bills will take important steps to ensure that workers are treated with the respect and fairness that they deserve. Senate Bill 106 will protect whistle blowers who do the right thing in reporting abusive employers. Senate Bill 914 will put employers and workers on a more level playing field by making subtle yet important changes to existing statutes. Importantly, this bill would also protect employers who make a good faith effort to follow the law. Senate Bill 1037 extends a proven tool to workers who find themselves victimized by employers who try to evade collections through legal red tape and shell games.

We must put a stop to the exploitation of low wage workers at the hands of employers who expect little if any retaliation. Furthermore, employers who do follow the rules should not find themselves at a competitive disadvantage for paying their workers fair wages.

Respectfully Submitted,
Nick Torres
Director of Advocacy