

Testimony in favor of HB No. 5378:

“An Act Concerning the Standard Rate of Wages”

Hearing of the Joint Committee on Labor and Public Employees

Thursday, March 3, 2016

Hill Regional Career High School

New Haven, CT

Sarah Bennett

Security Guard at Department of Children and Families, New Haven

Good afternoon and thank you to the committee for hearing my testimony today. My name is Sarah Bennett and I've been working for six and a half years as a Security Guard at the Department of Children and Families. For the first three years, I worked there without a wage increase. The wage increase we received three years ago was made possible by our coverage under the Standard Wage law. Three years ago we were also able to win a union, and now I'm a proud member of Local 32BJ SEIU. The Standard Wage Law coverage has made a tremendous difference. And I'm here today to ask for your support in passing HB 5378. It would make sure security guards like me are clearly covered by the law that has improved our lives so much.

That coverage made things more affordable for me and my two kids. My daughter Malaysia is 21, and has a medical condition. I'm a single mom, and though my insurance only covers me, our pay increase allowed me to provide for some of her needs as well. My son Essa is six, and I can better afford to have him in activities and school outings, getting him clothes and the everyday essentials that he needs.

Still, I know that this coverage would be more secure if HB 5378 passed.

I believe security guards deserve that protection. Providing security at the Department of Children and Families can be detrimental sometimes. I have to maintain and supervise visits of clients, and make sure the environment stays at a cool level. People come in really angry because they're in a situation of their kids being put into custody of the state. I have to make sure people are not cursing out or hurting the workers. That's the daily environment.

Before I go to work every morning, I pray to God that I get home safely. I always know that anything could happen at any moment, and I just try to take it in stride. I'm not complaining – I'm proud of the work I do and the protection I provide — I'm just explaining why my coworkers and I deserve some support. HB 5378 would let us know our backs are being watched while we support other state employees. Thank you.