



State of Connecticut  
**COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Central Office ~ 25 Sigourney Street, Hartford, CT 06106

*Promoting Equality and Justice for all People*

**Committee on Labor and Public Employees**  
**Tuesday, March 8, 2016**

**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB-393,  
AN ACT CONCERNING DOMESTIC WORKERS**

Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak, Senator Hwang, Representative Rutigliano, Vice Chairs and Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee:

The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) supports **SB-393**, which provides additional protection under the law for domestic workers, who are as a group more frequently subjected to discrimination, exploitation and abuse than other workers.<sup>1</sup>

Domestic workers are often subjected to the most intolerable working conditions, especially when those workers are not legally eligible to work in this country, and are therefore part of the underground economy ripe for exploitation. Requiring employers to inform these employees of their rights is a first step to their empowerment. By its language, any domestic worker who earns more than \$1000 in any calendar quarter would now be subject to the anti-discrimination laws.

CHRO does recommend that, in addition to the information required by Section 2 of the proposed bill, which amends CONN. GEN. STAT. § 31-71f to require that employers provide domestic workers with information regarding their wages, hours and working conditions, employers should also be required to notify all domestic workers of the right to a workplace free of discrimination and the process for filing a complaint when such discrimination occurs. All other employers in Connecticut are required to provide this information. This could be easily accomplished by adding a requirement that the employer provide a copy of the poster required by CONN. GEN. STAT. §§ 46a-54(13) and (15)(A). These posters are available, free of charge, on the CHRO's website in both English and Spanish.

This proposed bill also adds special protection to individuals who are employed as domestic workers. Employers currently must employ three or more domestic workers to be within the statutory definition of "employer". In the case of domestic workers, the proposed bill would amend CONN. GEN. STAT. § 46a-51(10) by cutting the number to one. It would, however, leave the current threshold of three employees for all other employers in Connecticut. The CHRO anticipates that such a significant change in the definition of "employer" will require additional staff to handle the influx of new complaints. The new complaints will especially impact the Commission's case processing and public hearing functions and require two additional attorneys.

While CHRO strongly supports protections for all workers and believes that every workplace--no matter how small—should be free from discrimination, this bill does require a fiscal note. Currently, employers of fewer than three individuals are not subject to the anti-discrimination provisions of our statutes,<sup>2</sup> because they are not considered "employers". Changing the statute, even if only for domestic workers, will result in a significant increase in the number of complaints that the CHRO receives. With these caveats, the CHRO supports this bill.

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy Zarate Byrd, The Dirty Side of Domestic Work: An Underground Economy and the Exploitation of Undocumented Workers, 3 DePaul J. for Soc. Just. 245 (2010).

<sup>2</sup> Thibodeau v. Design Group One Architects, LLC, 260 Conn. 691(2002).