



State of Connecticut COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Central Office ~ 450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, CT 06103

Promoting Equality and Justice for all People

LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES
Thursday, February 16, 2017

Testimony in Support of H.B. 6668, An Act Concerning Pregnant Women in the Workplace

Good mornings/afternoon Senator Gomes, Senator Miner and Representative Porter of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Cheryl Sharp; I am the Deputy Director of the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities and I am here to speak in favor of HB 6888, An Act Concerning Pregnant Women in the Workplace.

The mission of the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities is to eliminate discrimination through civil and human rights law enforcement and to establish equal opportunity and justice for all persons within the state through advocacy and education. Pregnant women are frequently discriminated against in the workplace; they are terminated, denied leave or subjected to harassment. Some reasons given by employers to CHRO investigators for firing pregnant employees are (1) they believe pregnant employees should rest and take care of themselves, (2) fear of an injury and/or lawsuit, fear of increased medical costs and/or additional time off from work or (3) the employer believes that customers are uncomfortable with pregnant workers. Obviously, the decision as to whether to work during pregnancy should be made by the pregnant employee in consultation with her medical provider; it is not up to the employer.

Connecticut is already very progressive with respect to protections for pregnant employees. Conn. Gen. Stat. §46a-60(a)(7) already prohibits an employer from terminating a woman's employment because of her pregnancy, from refusing to grant a reasonable leave of absence for disability resulting from the pregnancy along with any compensation accrued such as disability leave and from refusing to reinstate her to her original position. Connecticut law is more expansive than federal law, in that employers in Connecticut are also required to make reasonable efforts to transfer a pregnant woman to a suitable temporary position when the pregnant employee gives written notice that she believes continued employment in her original job poses risk of injury to the employee or her fetus and allows her to appeal the decision to deny such transfer. Despite these protections, CHRO received more than 70 complaints of pregnancy discrimination last year¹.

Pregnant women are often a significant breadwinner and source of support to their families, also adding significant contribution to the economy of the State of Connecticut.

¹ CHRO Annual Report 2015-2016