

Testimony
Labor and Public Employees Committee
March 9, 2023

In support of

HB 6859 An Act Concerning Predictable Scheduling

SB 1177 An Act Concerning One Fair Wage

SB 1178 An Act Expanding Connecticut Paid Sick Days

SB1180 An Act Concerning Rideshare and Delivery Driver Minimum Standards

Joelle Fishman, Chair, Connecticut Communist Party USA

Senator Kushner, Representative Sanchez, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee,

My name is Joelle Fishman, I live in New Haven, and I am testifying today on behalf of the Connecticut Communist Party in favor of bills concerning predictable scheduling, one fair wage, expanding Connecticut paid sick days, and setting minimum standards for rideshare and delivery drivers.

I would like to appreciate the Labor Committee for bringing these bills forward for the dignity and respect of working people, and especially low wage workers, women and people of color.

Such hearings have often taken place on and around International Women's Day, which we celebrate because of the courageous women in our country who walked off their sweatshop jobs in the last century demanding health and safety and wages and the right to vote. They awakened the solidarity of women around the world.

The COVID – 19 pandemic exposed and increased inequalities of race, gender and wealth in our state and nationally, as well as our upside down tax policy. It is incumbent that in Connecticut we not go back to the old ways, but instead take decisive action to move forward for workers' rights and equity.

In 2023 thousands of workers and their families are hanging on by a thread trying to make ends meet while at the same time the income of the wealthiest few has soared. The resources are there to fulfill every one of these modest bills to improve the lives of working people in Connecticut.

- Predictable Scheduling impacts 250,000 shift workers in hospitality, retail and food services, primarily low-wage workers in Connecticut. It is basic for any worker to know their work schedule two weeks in advance, with the right to an 11 hour rest between shifts. It is not possible to take an extra needed job, plan for

childcare, make a doctor appointment, or take care of other necessities without having a stable schedule and knowing definite work hours in advance. I will always remember the story of one fast food worker who got fired when she had to take her child to a doctor appointment and was called in to work at the last minute. There are countless such horror stories that hurt both the worker and the business. Please have the courage in 2023 to pass this bill that has come before you many times.

- The 70,000 tipped workers in Connecticut are mostly women and over a third are women of color. The practice of tipping was first established by the restaurant industry after emancipation from slavery as a way to avoid paying Black women. How can continuation of this practice be justified in this day? Every worker deserves a guaranteed minimum wage.
- The language of the current paid sick days law excludes 88 percent of workers in Connecticut from guaranteed coverage. If the pandemic taught anything it is surely that paid sick days, especially for low wage workers, are critical. The glaring requirements that stand in the way need correction so that every worker is covered, no matter the size of their employer, their length of time on the job, or their family structure. This is a matter of individual and public health and safety.
- Driving for Uber and Lyft has become a fall-back job for numbers of workers in need of employment. The organization they are building, Connecticut Drivers United, has brought forth many grievances with these huge companies including the percentage of each ride that goes to the drivers. Their proposal for minimum pay standards and transparency are reasonable and warrant support.

It is the responsibility of government to make sure that families can thrive. The harsh lessons of the pandemic, which further enriched the few at the expense of the many, require concrete steps to meet the needs of essential workers, address discrimination according to race and gender and ensure a Recovery for All.

On International Women's Day 2023, let us honor the working women, and men, who are organizing and standing up for their rights and the rights of their families like never before. Passing the bills before you today will be a powerful step toward improving quality of life and the economy for workers in Connecticut and for our state.

