



Brazilian Immigrant Center

Fighting for Social and Economic Justice

November 19, 2014

Sen. Gary Winfield
Rep. Peter Tercyak
Domestic Workers Taskforce
Legislative Office Building
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06606

Dear Senator Winfield, Rep Tercyak, and Esteemed Members of the Domestic Worker Taskforce:

I have had the pleasure of working with domestic workers in Connecticut for two years. Our membership in Bridgeport is comprised of Latina, Haitian, and West Indian women who work as housecleaners, nannies, and caregivers for the elderly.

Some of the women have struggled significantly in their work. One of our domestic workers was propositioned and sexually harassed by one of her clients in Fairfield County. Another has suffered humiliation by being told she is an "expensive babysitter" and loses her pay because she cannot take time off when her toddler son is sick or bring her child with her to work. Other times she has had to leave work late, leaving her own child in daycare with no one to pick him up. Several women have been exploited as housecleaning helpers, receiving well below the state's hourly minimum wage. Lack of clarity around work responsibilities often lead to more work, longer hours, and no additional pay.

Domestic work is undervalued in our society and the lack of dignity and respect for this profession is reflected in our state's laws. These hardworking, industrious women provide care and comfort for Connecticut's families, yet their work is so often debased. Domestic work and the men and women who perform this work enable Connecticut families to earn their livings, enable them to have leisure time that would otherwise be spent doing household tasks, and also affords them the ability to pay state income taxes. Our state's laws do not adequately protect the state's domestic workforce in the event of harassment, discrimination or injury on the job. Why should this work, which is so critical for the healthy functioning and well being of Connecticut's families, be excluded from basic protections?

A Connecticut Domestic Worker Bill of Rights is not only sound for the workforce but for the domestic worker employers. We urge you to consider reforms that will benefit both parties, the employers and the employees.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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