

TESTIMONY CONCERNING A DOMESTIC WORKERS BILL OF RIGHTS

My name is Mark Kosnoff and I am the Executive Director of United Action Connecticut, a faith based, social justice organization. I would like to express my support and the support of our organization for House Bill 5527 and for continued legislative initiatives that improve the job standards and working conditions of domestic workers in Connecticut.

As the voice of a faith based organization I view the current industry standards for domestic workers as morally unacceptable. Although I realize there are probably domestic workers who are satisfied with their current situation, we know that the majority of these workers, predominately women, are being taken advantage of and are not being properly compensated. The pay and working conditions that many of these individuals are subjected to would never be allowed in most other industries. In fact, there would be outrage if workers in other industries were subjected to similar conditions.

Besides the moral incorrectness of this situation there is simply the unfairness that domestic workers face. Why are domestic workers excluded from the same guidelines and standards of other workers? Is it because they are predominately women? Is it because they are often immigrants? Is it because this work is viewed as unskilled labor? Or is it that their job was once perceived as not worthy of the same benefits and protections as other jobs and thus have simply become the victims of an antiquated law? What ever the reason is, it would be viewed as discriminatory in any other industry in this day and age.

The United States was founded on the basis that all people have certain inalienable rights. We are a nation that stands up against human rights violations wherever they may arise. Should we not practice what we preach and there by grant domestic workers the same rights as all other workers. There is overwhelming evidence that the work that these individuals do is important and necessary to our economy and I can think of no reason why they should not enjoy the same rights as workers in other industries.

I ask the State legislature to correct this immoral and unfair situation. Let's ensure that domestic workers make at least minimum wage, are eligible for overtime pay, have the protection of workers compensation, have limits on the number of hours they can work in a day or a week and be protected from harassment and discrimination. We need to realize that domestic workers, like individuals in manufacturing, retail, medical and countless other service industries are an integral part of our economy and therefore should be treated no differently.

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