



Committee on Labor and Public Employees

Public Testimony of the CT Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)

*H.B. 5270: An Act Concerning the Right of a Public Employee to
Join or Support a Union*

Submitted by: Madeline Granato, Policy Director
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The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) is a statewide, nonprofit organization that advocates for and empowers women and girls in Connecticut, especially those who are underserved or marginalized. For forty-six years, CWEALF has been a leader in the development of policy solutions that enhance women's economic security and combat discrimination at work.

CWEALF urges the Committee to support H.B. 5270: *An Act Concerning the Right of a Public Employee to Join or Support a Union*.

Women, especially women of color, who are affiliated with a union or whose job is covered by a union contract earn higher wages and are much likely to access employer-provided health insurance than women who are not in unions.ⁱ

Women currently make up nearly half of the Connecticut workforce and are a growing number of breadwinners to their families; however, they continue to earn significantly less than their male counterparts. Women in our state earn, on average, \$0.84 to every dollar paid to men.ⁱⁱ This disparity is greater for women of color: African American women earn \$0.57 and Latina women earn \$0.48 compared to every dollar earned by white, non-Hispanic men.

Elimination of the gender wage gap is critical to boost families out of poverty. In Connecticut, 5.5% of working women live in poverty. If the gender wage gap did not exist, this number would drop to as low as 2.4%. The current poverty rate for single working mothers in CT is 24.4%. This number would drop to 14.6% if they received pay equal to their male counterparts.

Women's earnings increase when they participate in unions. Nationally, research shows that among women working full-time, those in unions have median weekly earnings of \$942, compared with \$723 for non-union workers, an increase of 30 percent.ⁱⁱⁱ Across all major racial and ethnic groups of women, median earnings are higher when comparing full-time workers in unions will full-time non-union workers. This earnings advantage is largest for Hispanic women. While Hispanic women earn the lowest of any racial/ethnic group, Hispanic women in unions earn \$264 more weekly, a 47% increase, than those who are not.^{iv}

Women covered by a union contract (77%) are also more likely to have health insurance provided by their employer or union than those who are not covered by a union contract (51%).^vHealth insurance coverage significantly reduces mortality and improves access to health care, treatment for chronic illness, and use of primary and preventive care.

Union participation is a critical contributor to the economic security and workforce advancement of women. We urge the Committee to support H.B. 5270. Thank you.

ⁱ Institute for Women's Policy Research. 2018. Retrieved from: <https://iwpr.org/publications/union-advantage-women-2018/>

ⁱⁱ National Women's Law Center. Retrieved from <https://nwlcc.org/state/connecticut/>

ⁱⁱⁱ See note 1.

^{iv} See note 1.

^v See note 1.