

## **Labor and Public Employees Committee**

Public Testimony of the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)  
S.B. 943: *An Act Concerning Wage Education and Enforcement Relating to Domestic Workers*

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March 3, 2021

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 and marginalized. For forty-seven years, CWEALF has been a leading advocate in the development of policy solutions that advance women's economic security, combat discrimination, and increase gender equity in Connecticut.

CWEALF supports S.B. 943: *An Act Concerning Wage Education and Enforcement Relating to Domestic Workers*.

The same issues exacerbated by the current COVID-19 pandemic have significantly impacted the lives of many Connecticut workers for many years prior to the public health crisis. Women, especially women of color, are overrepresented in low-wage jobs on the frontlines of the crisis which, even prior to the crisis, do not provide a liveable wage or basic employee protections.

Women are also overrepresented in the domestic workforce, a community that many overlook and who do not have the educational resources to advocate for themselves in the workplace. Domestic workers were excluded from basic labor protections for 60 years, and in 2013, the United States Department of Labor issued rules that guaranteed minimum wage and overtime for more domestic workers. Although a big step forward, domestic workers are still left out of critical policies to educate themselves and their employers on their rights and responsibilities.

Wage theft is a growing problem for domestic workers. In a study of 400 domestic workers across New Jersey in 2019, more than half had been victims of wage theft. Since jobs are very scarce and many workers have found themselves financially

suffering throughout this economic recession, domestic workers are even more afraid to report labor law violations and voice their concerns.

Senate Bill No. 943 will create a program within the Connecticut Department of Labor to educate workers and employers to ensure a collaborative and efficient workplace where domestic workers are earning the wages they deserve. Senate Bill No. 943 mirrors similar legislation passed in California and cities including New York, Chicago and Seattle. In order to achieve a transparent, comprehensive and synergistic program, California partnered with community organizations to do outreach, education and enforcement to the most vulnerable workers.

As we slowly approach the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, we must continue to explore ways to better support our workforce now and in the future. We urge the Committee to pass S.B. 943 to benefit domestic workers and continue every effort in Connecticut to advocate and support communities most impacted by COVID-19.