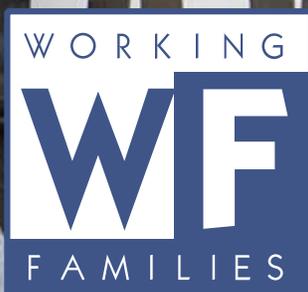


Women's Economic Agenda for Hartford

Economic Opportunity and Security for All





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Women's Economic Agenda for Hartford

Principles

& Solutions

We need to do more to create economic opportunity and security for women.

We're fighting for policies that will help create an economy that works for women.

Close the Wage Gap

Women still make only seventy-seven cents for every dollar a man makes. We must pursue policies that actively seek to close this gender wage gap.

Work / Life Balance

Women, who make up the vast majority of family caregivers, should not have to make the impossible choice between caring for their families and earning a paycheck. We need policies that allow for a balance between work and family.

Job Security

Job security is crucial to ensure the long-term financial wellbeing of women and families. Workers who have to take a leave from work or cannot commit to a particular schedule because of family care must be protected from losing their jobs.

Eliminate Discrimination

Women have endured from sexual harassment, sex discrimination, and retaliation. All workers must be protected from discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, age, race, religion, or pregnancy.

Corporate Accountability

Corporations have a fundamental responsibility to provide their workers with wages and benefits they can survive on. We must hold corporations accountable for the poverty wages they pay employees and for any discriminatory actions.

Paid Family & Medical Leave

Create an insurance style paid family and medical leave program for a worker's long-term sickness, or care for a newborn or adopted child, or sick family member.

Paid Sick Days

Expand Connecticut's successful, landmark Paid Sick Days program to include more workers and be competitive with paid sick day's laws in neighboring states and cities.

Raise the Minimum Wage

Eliminate the sub-minimum wage for tipped workers that allows companies to pay some workers below the minimum wage. Raise the minimum wage to \$15/hour by 2022.

Reentry Employment Support

Advocate for more legislation, such as the "Ban the Box" bill that goes into effect on January 1, 2017, that protects employees from discrimination surrounding their criminal history during the employment application process.

Fair Scheduling

Give workers stability and security by requiring employers to respect employee's time with advance planning and fair work schedules.

Stop Wage Theft

Increase penalties for employers who steal wages from their workers, increase protections against wage theft, and create easier avenues of redress for workers who have experienced wage theft.

Women in

Here in Connecticut, we have fought and won battles that have provided much needed relief to our workers. Despite those victories, women continue to face serious disparities in our changing economy.

Connecticut

We seek to empower women in a new and difficult economic climate, to promote women's rights at the workplace, and secure fair wages and benefits for women.

Women Make

77¢

for every dollar a man earns

African American Women Make

64¢

for every dollar a white man earns

Latina Women Make

55¢

for every dollar a white man earns

80%

of mothers are primarily responsible to take their children to medical appointments and women represent more than 2/3 of adults providing substantial assistance to elderly parents.

1 IN 3

paid by the hour work only part time (34 hours or fewer). Compared to full time workers, part time workers are twice as likely to have an unpredictable schedule.

73%

of restaurant servers are women. 2/3 of women report sexual harassment at the workplace. Poverty rates for servers are 300% of the national average, and they are 2x more likely to depend on food stamps.



My name is Ashley Daja Cooney



My name is Ashley Daja Cooney.

I live in Hartford, where I was born and raised. I am 8 months pregnant. I currently work as a server. Making a tipped wage affects me way more now that I am pregnant. I don't get paid time off so however long I decide to take off that's how long I won't have money, especially if I don't save. If I didn't have my boyfriend to help me out it would be ten times harder.

I have to pay all these bills such as car notes, rent, phone bill, student loans while saving to prepare myself for when I won't be working after having the baby. It really sucks. I am trying to sign up for cash assistance since I won't be working but they only give \$395 a month and my rent is \$800. For women who are single moms and don't get paid leave, it is

extremely difficult. Right now I am sick and swollen from my pregnancy but taking time off is not an option. I need the money.

As a black woman, I understand that my appearance plays a role in how much money I make since I depend on customers' perceptions of me and how much they are willing to tip. I have noticed if I present myself in a more ethnic manner, instead of society's expectations of beauty standards I get tipped less. I feel like women have to use their appearances way more than men to make a livelihood especially in the server world. We often rely on how other people views of us just to make a day's pay. A lot of judgment and preconceived notions surrounding race, class, gender come into play.

I think paid leave is very important and my pay should be guaranteed. This would relieve a lot of the stress employees have to make ends meet.



My name is Desiree Nicole Taylor

My name is Desiree Nicole Taylor.

I started working as soon as I was 16. My great grandmother told me I needed to start Capitol Workforce, which is an inner city pilot program for the employment of inner city youth. My great grandmother barely had enough money to pay for her own personal expenses with the money she was getting for her disabilities. When she became my legal guardian this was an added stress in terms of her financial expenses. If I wanted to buy myself anything I needed to get a job. With the way minimum wage is set up it was impossible for me to provide myself with everything I needed, especially as I began to pay for my own bills, so I found it very difficult to believe that people were expected to survive off this wage with more responsibilities than mine.

I work in retail and I am also a student. Being a college student, I felt like I was not able to enjoy or truly push myself to participate in the

different college experiences because I needed to work to pay my bills. I am only 20 years old and I don't have a family to feed or a house to pay rent for, but I still feel the pressure.

I got in a car accident recently that I was paying a weekly bill for, and was my sole means of transportation. Now I have no car and have had to return to taking the bus to get to work to be able to pay my car loan that doesn't even exist anymore. Once the semester starts up I don't know how I am going to manage getting to school and work, as I am also moving back in with my great grandmother to

decrease living costs. There is always the anxiety of being disposable in these minimum wage jobs. There is a specific function and you are just a part of the machine, if you don't fulfill that function you are useless. There is no humanity. You being in impoverished conditions, but then being so disposable, is extremely stressful.



My name is

Marta Hernandez

My name is Marta Hernandez and I was born in El Salvador.

I came to the U.S. in September of 2006, making a home in Hartford. In El Salvador I was a teacher at a small school where I oversaw students from first to ninth grade. Although I went through a rough couple months, I was happy because of the opportunities I was giving my two boys. I have had multiple jobs throughout the decade that I have been here, all paying minimum wage.

Today I work at a printing and publishing company, packaging different paper materials. I got this job through a work agency that is run by one man who “rents” us to this company. The company pays this man and then he pays us. I am unsure of how much he gets paid for the entire job, how much he makes, or how

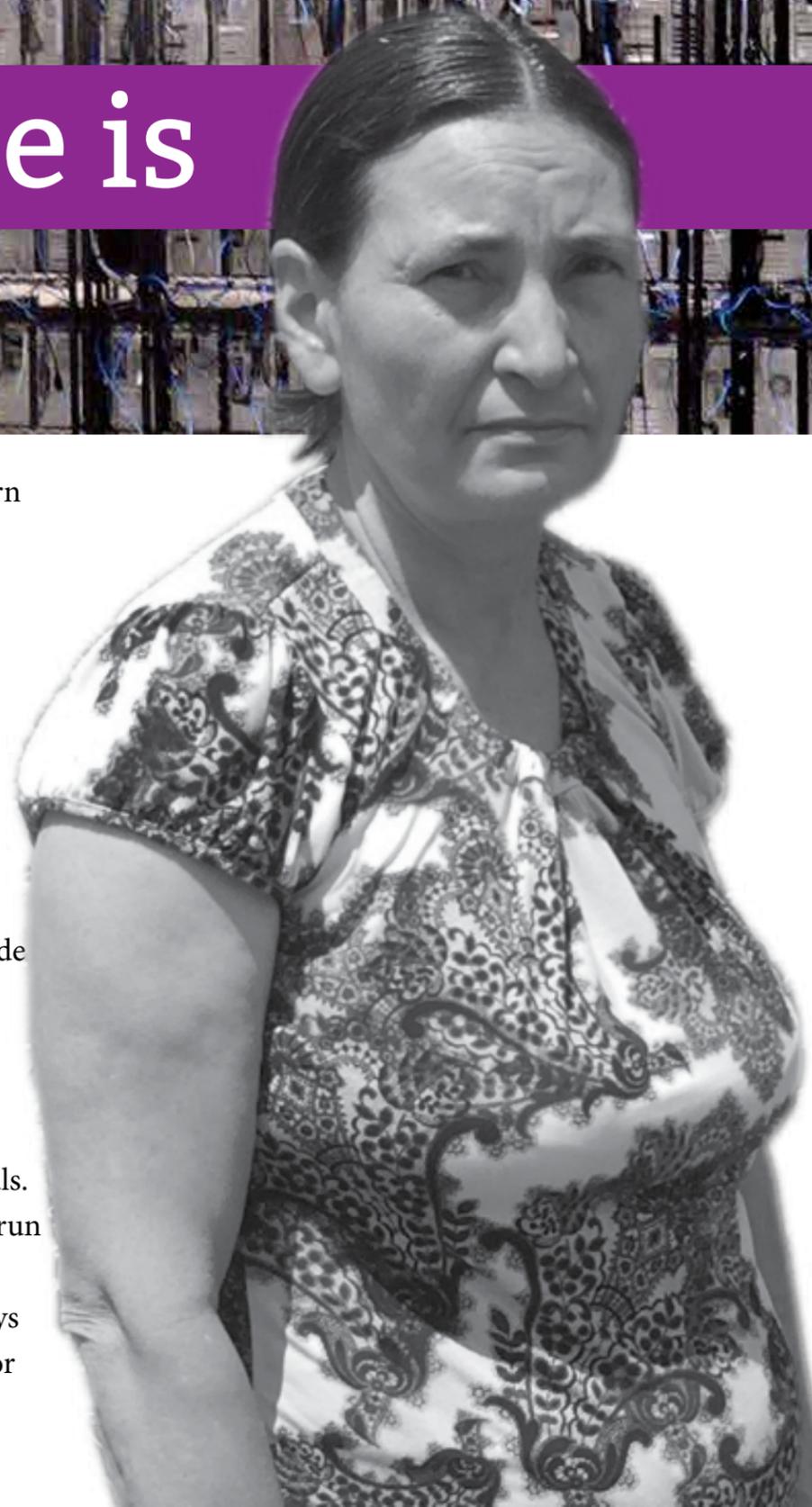
he divides pay. I just know I make minimum wage. Also you don’t get paid when you need to take time off so if my boys were sick or I needed to go the hospital I would not make any money that day. On top of that they let us know when they need people to come in and often times there will not be any work available for a couple days. It is very stressful.

Back in El Salvador I felt like an important person, playing an important role in the community, but here I feel small. I can’t speak or write the language, and I don’t have time to learn because I need to work. You become traumatized. Management gets mad when you can’t understand English and I feel looked down upon. I always think it is just the way it is and it could be worse, I conform to what is available because bills need to be paid.

I wish I could work during the day, make more

than minimum wage, be able to take paid time off when hard times occur, and have a more stable schedule. Also this job is not accessible by public transportation so I end up having to pay more money just to get to the place.

At the end of the day I am happy to have come here because, although my quality of life has not changed and I often struggle, I can definitely say that my boys have a better life that they would not have been able to achieve in El Salvador and that was my reason for coming here.



My name is Ashley - Marie Calderon



My name is Ashley-Marie Calderon. I realized the importance of money after I had my son.

I was 19 when I was pregnant. When I was four months I went and got a job at Radio Shack. My employer realized I was pregnant and sent his assistant manager to ask me if I was pregnant. Next thing I know I was getting pulled into the office. He read everything on the job description. He said I lied on my

application because, due to my pregnancy, I would not be able to crawl into small places among other tasks. He cut down my hours to 8 a week in the attempt to get me to quit. I knew I was going to have a hard time finding another job as I started to show more so I stuck it out.

I ended up becoming homeless and that was the first time I moved to Hartford. I lived at the Salvation Army. My main goal was to prepare for the baby, as the father was not in the picture at the time, and make sure I was out of the shelter by the time he was born.

I got a couple more minimum wage jobs but ran into similar issues of low hours and being laid off. It was at this time I became a bus driver which is what I presently do. It is decent pay but the hours all over the place. Often times you have summers off. I have seen quite a few bus drivers go homeless with their kids

during the summer months. You are always paying catch up from your last vacation as there is no paid time off.

Today I have my Associate's degree from Capitol and my Bachelors in Criminal Justice from Connecticut Central State University. Something that could have make a big difference is having a more substantial paid maternity leave. Having to pay bills and take care of my infant son was difficult. I had an employer tell me that the way their scheduling was set up they couldn't accommodate my breast feeding schedule, but once I stopped breast feeding I could come back. There need to be more programs that can help mothers, and general funding for these community resources. At the end of the day you have to go without sometimes to move forward. I don't want to live like this forever.

My name is Paula Gordon-Jackson

My name is Paula Gordon-Jackson. I should be retired.

I have been working in the mortgage industry as a mortgage processor for more than 20 years. As the industry started changing I got laid off and ended up collecting unemployment compensation for 4-5 years. This was back when unemployment was allowed for a long period of time. I got temp jobs, unemployment would stop, and then I would get right back on. I ended up being late on everything I could possibly be late on. The only reason I didn't lose my home was because of "mortgage modification". The mortgage company couldn't repossess my home and had to work with me.

I was unable to keep up with all my bills. I lost my car, lost all my credit cards, and my credit went downhill. I remember crying in line at the food wagon trying to feed myself and

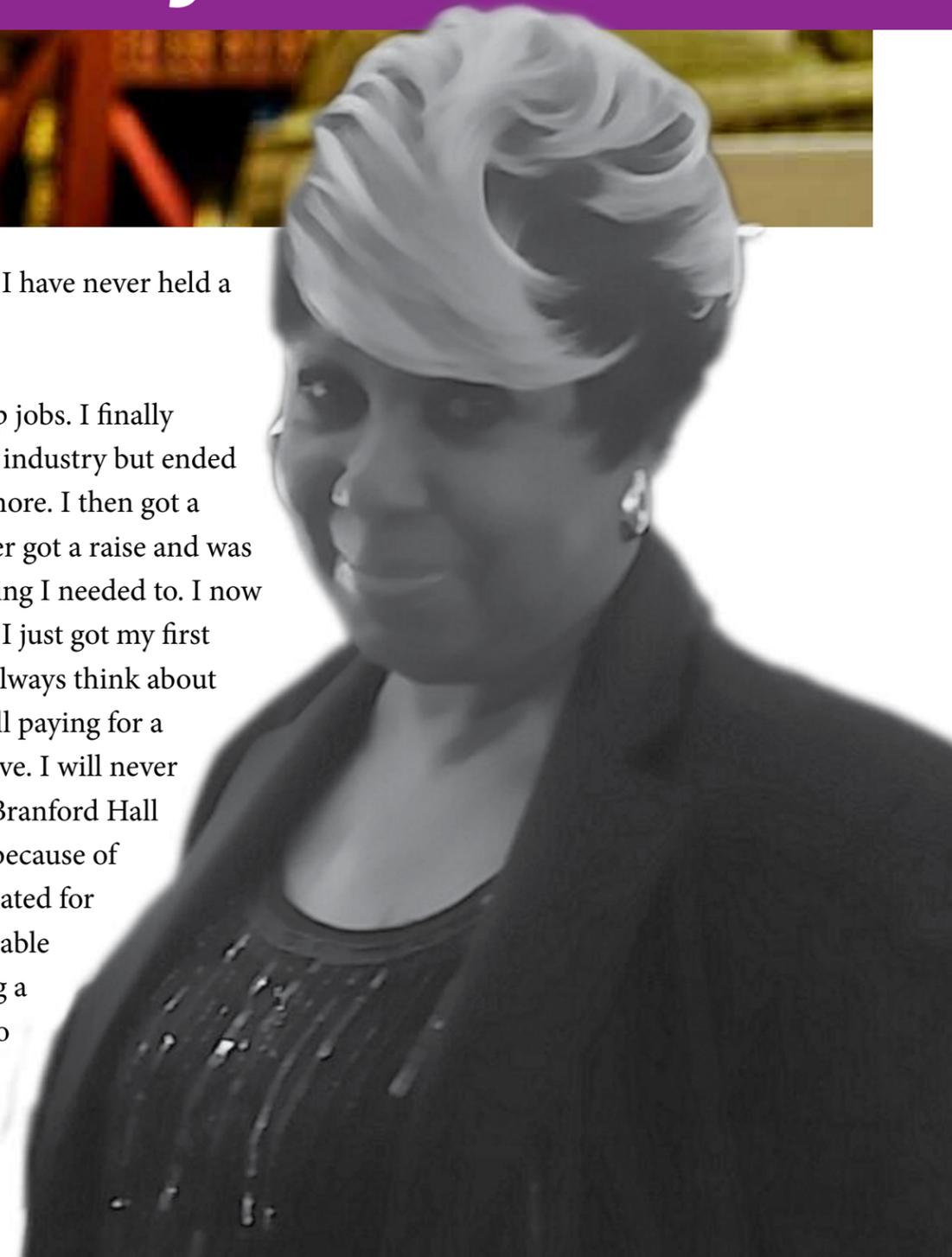
thinking about everything that was happening. I lost a lot during this time.

I needed to change my career and I went to check out Branford Hall, an educational institution where you can get certificates for different jobs. I graduated and got my paralegal certificate while still having paying student loans.

When it came time to find a job all the jobs were only offering me less money than unemployment. It was already hard to survive off of unemployment so I could not take a job that paid less. I went back to Branford Hall and explained that I was having a hard time finding a job. The administrator said it was probably because of my age. I was dumbfounded and wondered why they did not tell me this earlier. I was hurt, frustrated, and sad. I was paying student loans for an education that I was never

going to use. Till this day I have never held a paralegal job.

I went back to doing temp jobs. I finally returned to the mortgage industry but ended up getting laid off twice more. I then got a more stable job but I never got a raise and was struggling to pay everything I needed to. I now work at United Bank and I just got my first bonus. I am happy but I always think about the student loans I am still paying for a career that I never will have. I will never forget those words from Branford Hall administrator "probably because of your age", I was discriminated for my age and led to an unstable job situation while adding a bill of student loans for no reason.



My name is Sandy LoMonico

My name is Sandy LoMonico and I was born in New Britain in 1981 to two Italian immigrants.

I lived in New Britain until middle school and went into foster care when I was 14 years old. It was during this time that I realized I needed to make my own money and by 13, 14 years old I started to sell drugs. I ending up doing a 6-month stint at a juvenile facility.

Once I graduated I started working two jobs, from 8 in the morning till 7:30 at night. That is when everything changed. I found out I was pregnant at 19 and my mom got diagnosed with cancer. I quit my job to stay home and

take care of her. My elderly dad kicked me out due to my pregnancy. I became homeless and my car broke down making it difficult to search for a job. After a couple of years trying to make it on Section 8 housing and unstable jobs, I ended up with a felony conviction. After completing my sentence I went after a dual degree of Nursing and Social Work. I still could not find a job during this time, people kept saying that once my 5-year probation was done I would get a job. These same people, once I completed my probation, did not hire me.

I completed a Certified Nurse Aide course. I was hired and I told them about my record. A week later I was fired. They said I was a “liability”, if something went missing I would be held accountable.

I still have not been able to find a stable, well-paying job. I have now graduated with a dual-Master’s degree in Public Health and Social Work. It has been important for my daughter to see me go to college, and I have hope. But I have realized, through my education and life experiences, how the system has been set up for people to fail. The system has been built for some people to make it and most people to stay poor. Consistency and security is important, but when you live in poverty you just don’t get that.



My name is Yassra Raslam

My name is Yassra Raslam. I was 8 years old when I moved to Hartford from Brazil. At 17 years old I dropped out of school and needed to make money to help around the house. It is unrealistic what the U.S. offers for minimum wage. How do people think it is okay for people to live like that? Where do people think they are living? It is so unfair.

Today I make \$13.25. I am 5 years behind in repaying bills. I have debt that I owe prior to having my son. I can't repay everything because now my focus has to be my son. I never thought I was going to be in this situation. I never thought I would be 25, single with a 6 year old son, and working for the salary that I am. I make 4 dollars over minimum wage and it doesn't begin to cover what I need to afford. Money or lack

of money is the problem. If I am lucky I take home a thousand dollars every two weeks but my rent is \$1,200. I have to pay my babysitter. I am already over my budget just with those two payments. I moved to West Hartford recently for the sole reason to give my son a better education. It is crazy that I have to choose what I can afford over my son's access to quality education. After these payments I still have my phone, my car, my electricity; it doesn't cover everything. I worry that if my son or I ever got sick that everything would fall apart because we have no paid family or sick leave. I can't tell you the last time I was able to buy something for my son or myself. It is not fair to work so much but still not have enough money to live.

My family came here when I was really young for a better life but the struggles I see every day, I don't know if it is better. Sometimes I

want to ask my employers: do you really feel comfortable knowing your employee is only making a small amount of money to live by? Would you feel comfortable making that amount? I take care of my son and my mother. It is never enough, when do I get to take a breather? If people had better wages, people would make better decisions. It is depressing. You always have to think about yourself if you want to survive. You have to fend for yourself, you can't care for others because there is not enough to go around. It is bullshit. I have to choose what I need versus what I can afford. I work hard. I pride myself on my work ethic and what I bring to the table. One day I want to be a financial journalist. I want to talk about these issues, help people with financial planning, and one day hopefully this will change. All these people that make minimum wage don't deserve to be poor.



My name is Jasmine Vasquez

My name is Jasmine Vasquez and I live in Hartford.

I was a medical assistant at a podiatrist's office for about 16 months. The company sent me to certification classes for radiology and medical assistant. I was excited and very proud of myself.

Within a year, I was given raises that increased my pay by about \$5 per hour. I worked hard and was dedicated to the job. My family and I had finally reached a point where we were feeling financially secure.

However, in April of 2016, my daughter was diagnosed with Type I Diabetes. To prepare for life with her diagnosis, I had to take two classes, with an endocrinologist, which were each approximately 5 hours long. The

classes were only offered during work hours and they were something that needed to be taken immediately. I would also need to take additional time off to educate my daycare provider on my daughter's illness and time off to administer my daughter's insulin until they were comfortable doing it.

Since the company was a small business, I was not covered under Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). When I asked my employer to accommodate my schedule, he said he would consider it. Ultimately, he decided that I had too much on my plate and terminated my employment. I had no options at the time, I had to learn about my daughter's illness because any mistakes I made could be life threatening.

The concessions that I needed were not

excessive and if I were covered under FMLA I would still have a job and I would be paid while I miss work to care for my daughter. One that I was good at and adequately provided for my family.

24 Resources

This list is made up of only a few of the community resources/programs available in the Greater Hartford Area. Call 211, at no cost, to connect to all kinds of health and human services in the Greater Hartford Area. Calling this number will help you find out about many more programs that provide food, mental health, utility assistance, housing resources and beyond. Also visiting or calling CRT Resource Centers can connect you to services you may need during hard times. The staff will work with you for free to try to help you.

CRT Resource Centers, two Hartford Locations:

1. Address: 395 Wethersfield Avenue, Hartford

Phone: (860) 560-5881

Hours: Monday-Friday, 8am-4pm

2. Address: 330 Market Street, Hartford

Phone: (860) 560-5149

Hours: Monday-Friday, 8am-4pm

CRT Energy Assistance Program

Program that helps low to moderate-income households pay utility bills and help lower future bills.

Address: 395 Wethersfield Avenue, Hartford

Phone: (860) 560-5800

Hours: Monday-Friday, 8am-4pm

Greater Hartford Legal Aid

Provide free legal services to individuals or families living near the federal poverty level and live in the Greater Hartford Area. Do not handle criminal cases but civil legal cases (ex. Evictions, immigration status, employment discrimination, custody orders)

Address: 999 Asylum Avenue, 3rd Floor, Hartford CT

Phone: 860-541-5000

Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 8:30am-4:30pm

Hands on Hartford-MANNA and Neighborhood Service

Provide a free, shopping model community pantry where you can grab a cart and choose the food that best suits you.

Address: 55 Bartholomew Avenue, Hartford CT

Phone: 860-728-3201 Contact for hours!

Provide free meals. No dinner on Wednesdays.

Address: 45 Church Street, Hartford CT

Hours: Monday-Wednesday, Lunch: 12-12:30pm

Dinner: 6-6:30pm

Heart of God Healing Center

Offers one-time payment assistance with rent or other utility bills for Greater Hartford Area.

Address: 110 Walnut Street, Hartford, CT

Phone: (203) 302-5379

HRA Energy Assistance Program

Program that provides funding to help pay utility bills and manage transactions.

Address: 336 Arch Street, New Britain, CT

Telephone (24/7 call center): (860) 356-2000

Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 8:30am-4:30pm

Journey Home

Run a program called the "Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness". Provide emergency rental assistance and connect you to different homeless shelters depending on your needs.

Address: 255 Main Street 2nd Floor, Hartford CT

Phone: (860) 808-0336

Mercy Housing and Shelter

Get free diapers in Hartford. Also provide food, housing, education, and different support services for those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Address: 211 Wethersfield Avenue, Hartford CT

Phone: (860) 808-2111

Re-Entry Recovery Services

Program that provides different resources to ensure mental health, drug/alcohol support, housing assistance, case management.

Address: 330 Market Street, Hartford CT

Phone: (860) 761-7900

Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm

Salvation Army-Southern New England Division

Various homeless shelters throughout the state. Also different programs to provide emergency financial assistance such as rent, deposits, or energy bills.

Address: 225 South Marshall Street, Hartford

Phone: (860) 543-8438





Special Thanks

To **Katalina Euraque** for the fantastic job she has done in organizing Hartford women to speak up about their stories and demand change.

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grejve