



CONNECTICUT CATHOLIC PUBLIC AFFAIRS CONFERENCE
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TESTIMONY

S.B. "An Act Concerning Wage Education and Enforcement Relating to Domestic Workers"

Labor and Public Employees Committee

Public Hearing

March 4, 2021

The Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference is the public policy and advocacy organization representing the Catholic bishops in Connecticut. The Conference, a member of the CT Domestic Workers Coalition, urges the Labor Committee to *support* S.B. 943, "*An Act Concerning Wage Education and Enforcement Relating to Domestic Workers*".

Over the last several years, the Conference has become keenly aware of the abuse of domestic workers in terms of wages and conditions of employment. Many of these workers are immigrants, documented and undocumented, seeking to be participating and self-sustaining members of our communities. Unfortunately, there are members of our society who fail to recognize the rights of these workers to the minimum wage and other benefits commonly provided to other employees by employers or required by law. Many domestic workers, being new to our country, are unaware of their rights under law or are fearful of the legal system for a variety of reasons.

The Catholic Church has long taught that "all people have the right to economic initiative, to productive work, to just wages and benefits, to decent working conditions, as well as to organize and join unions or other associations".¹ S.B. 943 is an effort to give workers dignity and the protections they deserve as human beings through fair wages and legal protections.

Under existing state and federal law most domestic workers, as defined in this bill, are covered by minimum wage laws and laws providing them the right to receive a written document outlining not only wages, but numerous other conditions of employment. Unfortunately, most domestic workers are either unaware of their legal rights or afraid to raise the issue with their employer. They also are not aware of how to deal with a situation in which their legal rights are violated.

S.B. 943 attempts to address these issues in three distinct ways: 1) Clearly requiring a specific written agreement between a domestic worker and their employer, 2) establishing a program to educate domestic workers to their legal rights and how to file complaints with the Department of Labor, and 3) educate employers of their responsibilities under law. This bill proposes that the most economical and impactful way to accomplish these goals is through the utilization of existing community organizations that have close ties to the domestic worker community. These organizations would work in close cooperation with the Department of Labor.

¹ (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, [A Catholic Framework for Economic Life](#), no. 5)

The Conference believes that the proposed program in this legislation, with a supporting allocation of funds, will address a group of workers in our communities that has for too long been neglected, mistreated by employers and frowned down upon by many in our society. Their dignity as not only workers, but as contributing members of our society (documented or undocumented) must be respected.

Deacon David Reynolds

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