



CONNECTICUT CATHOLIC PUBLIC AFFAIRS CONFERENCE
134 FARMINGTON AVENUE
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06105 - 3784

**Labor and Public Employees Committee
Public Hearing, February 25, 2020
Testimony in
Support of
H.B. 5276 “An Act Concerning Domestic Workers”
by
Deacon David Reynolds, Associate Director of Public Policy**

The Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference, the public policy office of Connecticut’s Catholic Bishops, urges the members of the committee to support H.B. 5276, *An Act Concerning Domestic Workers*. As the employment of domestic workers – to provide elder care, child care, and homemaker services – has increased, the laws protecting this class of workers have lagged behind. This legislation will not only align domestic workers rights with those of most other workers in our state, but it may potentially increase the number of qualified workers who enter this field to meet the increasing demand for at home assistance in our society.

This proposed legislation is an effort to give domestic workers the dignity they deserve in the workplace, avoid worker exploitation, improve working conditions and increase legal protections. The Catholic Church has long held that “all people have the right to economic initiative, to productive work, to just wages and benefits, [and] to decent working conditions...”¹ H.B. 5276 is a step in the right direction in its requirements for an employer/employee agreement, clearly defined working hours, establishing privacy rights for live-in workers and termination of employment protections.

Passage of H.B. 5276 will address a group of works in our communities, comprised mostly of women, that has too long been neglected and subject to mistreatment by employers, with very little legal recourse. Their dignity as not only workers, but as contributing members of our society must be respected.

The Conference would like to urge the committee to examine two provisions that appear to be lacking from this proposed legislation and are vital to any worker in our state. First, is the guarantee that domestic workers are covered by Connecticut’s minimum wage laws. All workers in Connecticut should be covered by the state’s minimum wage law. The Conference has repeatedly heard from domestic workers that employers are not paying the minimum wage. Second, that the sexual harassment claims process to CHRO should be simplified for domestic workers seeking to bring such a complaint. As previously stated, most domestic workers are women, working in a one-on-one employment situation. This is an environment where protections against sexual harassment are truly needed.

In summary, the Conference urges passage of H.B. 5276 and urges the committee to consider the inclusion of the two critical provisions that are missing from the proposed legislation.

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