



SERVICE EMPLOYEES
INTERNATIONAL UNION
CTW, CLC

KYLE BRAGG
President

MANNY PASTREICH
Secretary Treasurer

LENORE FRIEDLAENDER
Assistant to the President

VICE PRESIDENTS

SHIRLEY ALDEBOL

KEVIN BROWN

JAIME CONTRERAS

DEAN DEVITA

ROB HILL

DENIS JOHNSTON

GABE MORGAN

ROCHELLE PALACHE

ROXANA RIVERA

JOHN SANTOS

CANDIS TOLLIVER

Capital Area District

Washington 202.387.3211

Baltimore 410.244.6299

Virginia 202.387.3211

Connecticut District

Hartford 860.560.8674

Stamford 203.674.9965

District 1201

215.923.5488

Florida District

305.672.7071

Hudson Valley District

914.328.3492

Mid-Atlantic District

215.226.3600

National Conference of

Firemen and Oilers

606.324.3445

New England District 615

617.523.6150

New Jersey District

973.824.3225

Testimony of Rochelle Palache, District Director and Vice President 32BJ SEIU

February 26, 2021

Governor's Proposed FY 2022-2023 Budget for Department of Labor

Thank you to Appropriations Committee for holding this hearing. My name is Rochelle Palache and I am testifying on behalf 32BJ which represents over 4,500 building service workers in the state of Connecticut and 175,000 members up and down the East Coast.

Domestic workers are a crucial part of the workforce they help take care of vulnerable groups like children and the elderly; their housekeeping frees many to perform other tasks they find rewarding. Unfortunately, we have not treated domestic workers with the respect they are due. Because of racial discrimination domestic workers along with agricultural workers have been excluded from federal and state protections offered to other employees.¹ Today, the immigration status of many domestic workers renders them additionally vulnerable to exploitation.²

This historical context helps explain why domestic workers are a particularly unprotected workforce. A Rutgers study one study found that 57% have been victims of wage theft.³ This is why it is crucial that the Department of Labor Wage & Workplace Standards Division receive more funding and that it collaborates with community organizations who have earned domestic workers' trust. Ensuring that domestic workers are paid the wages that they have earned is not just a matter of strict compliance with the labor laws, but also a matter of racial justice and of dignity for workers who have been unfairly marginalized. Workers should also be notified of their rights, without knowledge of their rights as workers the respect of their rights is left to the discretion of the employer. Most domestic workers are also members of communities that have been particularly impacted by Covid-19, it is essential that domestic workers as providers and family members are able to continue supporting their communities.

Please stand with us and support this bill and help bring justice to domestic workers.

¹ See Juan F. Rerea, The Echoes of Slavery: Recognizing the Racist Origins of the Agricultural and Domestic Worker Exclusion from the National Labor Relations Act, 72 Ohio St. L. J. 95 (2011).

² *Id.*

³ Wage Theft Work, Wage Theft Workplace Injuries, and No Sick Time: Report Uncovers Exploitation of New Jersey's Domestic Workers, Rutgers (Sept. 23, 2020), <https://smlr.rutgers.edu/news/wage-theft-workplace-injuries-no-sick-time-report-uncovers-exploitation-nj-domestic-workers>