

Children's Committee

Public Testimony of the CT Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)
S.B. 321: *An Act Stabilizing Working Families by Limiting "On Call" Shift Scheduling*
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The CT Women's Education and Legal Fund is a statewide nonprofit that advocates for and empowers women and girls in Connecticut, especially those who are underserved or marginalized. For nearly forty-five years, CWEALF has advocated for policies that advance the economic security of women across our state and promote gender equity in the workplace.

We urge the Committee to support S.B. 321: *An Act Stabilizing Working Families by Limiting "On Call" Shift Scheduling*.

Across our state, low-wage workers struggle to earn stable income because of unpredictable work schedules. Employees are often forced to go to work with little notice, maintain open availability for "on-call" shifts without any guarantee of work and have shifts canceled at the last minute. When workers cannot predict their hours or pay from day to day, they are often unable to secure child care or a second job or qualify for promotions that lead to better health and financial benefits.

In Connecticut, women make up 69% of the low-wage workforce.¹ Not only do women hold the majority of low-wage jobs in our state and across the country, they also continue to shoulder the majority of caregiving responsibilities. Unfair scheduling practices especially impact women of color, who are overrepresented in the low-wage workforce and among single mothers who work to support their families.

Unpredictable work schedules compromise low-wage workers' ability to access to quality, affordable and reliable child care. With income and work schedules that fluctuate, workers often have no choice but to cobble together child care at the last minute. Since child care centers require caregivers to pay a weekly or monthly fee, regardless of how often the child attends, holding a spot in a child care center is expensive and infeasible for workers unsure of when they will work that particular week.²

¹ National Women's Law Center. 2014. Underpaid and Overloaded: Women in Low-Wage Jobs. Retrieved from: https://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/final_nwlc_lowwagereport2014.pdf

² National Women's Law Center. 2017. Collateral Damage: Scheduling Challenges for Workers in Low-Wage Jobs and Their Consequences. Retrieved from: <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Collateral-Damage.pdf>

Unpredictable scheduling limits women's access to comprehensive and necessary health care. Routine, preventive care, including well-woman visits or pediatric appointments, is often scheduled long before low-wage workers receive their schedules. On-call shift scheduling often prevents women from being able to make appointments or forces them to cancel entirely, which may delay follow-up treatments or diagnoses.

Unstable and unpredictable work schedules also increase the difficulty for families to budget and pay their bills. According to the Retail Work and Family Life Survey, nearly half of the retail workers surveyed reported that their household incomes vary from week to week, while one-third reported that it is difficult for them to pay their bills in a typical month.³ Workers with variable schedules experience greater income volatility, which leads to higher stress and poor physical and mental health.

To grow Connecticut's economy, we must create working conditions that make success and economic sufficiency possible for our state's low-wage workforce, which is predominantly women and workers of color. In order to remain competitive in our region, Connecticut must pass important legislation like S.B. 321 that helps workers earn incomes to sustain their families and work a balanced work week.

We urge the Committee and Connecticut lawmakers to support S.B. 321 this year.

³ See note 2.