



**Testimony in Support of SB 552
Senate Workforce Committee**

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Chair Dembrow, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Andrea Miller, I'm the Executive Director of Causa, an organization that has worked with and advocated for Latino immigrant families since 1995.

Causa strongly supports Senate Bill 552, the Domestic Workers' Protection Act, and I commend the legislature for taking up this important issue again. Many of the women that Causa serves have been a domestic worker at some point in their lives.

Domestic work is a profession primarily performed by women, people of color, and immigrants and is critical to our economy. In Oregon there are roughly 10,000 domestic workers, 95% are women¹. Domestic workers help families meet many of the most basic physical, emotional, and social needs of the young and the old. They are nannies, taking care of our children while we are busy building our own careers, and they are caretakers—cleaning the house, cooking dinner, and tending to our elderly citizens.

Despite their central role in the economy and supporting families, domestic workers are often employed in substandard jobs. Working behind closed doors, beyond the reach of personnel policies, and often without employment contracts, they are subject to the whims of their employers. Some employers are generous, fair, and understanding. Others, unfortunately, many are not. Domestic workers often face issues in their work environment alone, without the support of co-workers.

The social isolation of domestic work is compounded by limited federal and state labor protections for this workforce. Many of the laws and policies that govern pay and conditions in the workplace simply do not apply to domestic workers.

This has become such a pervasive issue that the University of Illinois at Chicago administered the first national survey of domestic workers in the U.S., which surveyed over 2,000 nannies, caregivers, and housecleaners in 14 cities.² This survey found some startling facts:

- 23% of workers earned less than the state's minimum wage, and it's worse for live-in workers—67% of which earned less than minimum wage.
- 35% of domestic workers report that they worked long hours without breaks in the prior 12 months.
- Among workers who are fired from their job, 23% are fired for complaining about working conditions.

¹ Data Center, data taken from the American Community Survey 2005-2009, provided to Family Forward Oregon by Jay Donahue on March 8, 2013.

² *Home Economics, The Invisible and Unregulated World of Domestic Work*. Center for Urban Economic Development, University of Illinois at Chicago. <http://www.domesticworkers.org/homeeconomics/>



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- Of the workers that have formal contracts, 18% are fired for protesting violations of their contract or agreement.
- Interviews with domestic workers reveal that they often endure verbal, psychological, and physical abuse on the job – without recourse. Domestic workers, who are unprotected by contracts and laws available to other workers, fear employer retaliation.

SB 552 is a necessary step to ensure that this mostly women workforce can enjoy basic labor standards and protections like other workers, and will address many of the problems outlined in the study. I urge your support of the Domestic Workers' Protection Act.