Dear Hand in Hand Community,

Home is important. Having a home that is clean, that is a place of support, comfort, and renewal, brings more peace to our day-to-day lives.

Everyday, domestic workers feed, bathe, and love their employers’ children; they assist those of us who are seniors and people with disabilities to get ready to go to our own jobs; they support so many families to have stable homes. Domestic employers know the value of this labor better than anyone, and understand that creating fair working conditions is good for everyone.

For 75 years, domestic workers have been excluded from labor laws. Since 2010, employers have raised our voices through Hand in Hand working alongside child care providers, home care attendants, and housecleaners, to say that laws need to change, that employers need guidance and workers need protection and respect.

In 2013, we took major steps toward righting this 75-year-old wrong. It is a time of celebration for all of us who joined with workers and other allies to bring about historic change on the state and federal levels (see pg. 2).

In the coming year, Hand in Hand will work to implement these new laws and pilot even higher community standards. We will organize in our neighborhoods, cities, and states. We will come together in some of our most challenging moments: when we’ve just given birth; when our aging parents suddenly fall ill; when those of us with disabilities are leaving our parents homes for the first time to live on our own.

These are the moments when workers enter our homes, bringing skill, energy, patience, and perspective. These are the moments when we will support each other to ensure that our homes are the best workplaces they can be.

With gratitude,

Danielle Feris
National Director

9/26/13, Governor Brown signs the California Domestic Workers Bill of Rights into law surrounded by workers along with Danielle, Jacob, Jessica, Lindsay & Nikki from Hand in Hand.
Hand in Hand Helps Make History
Legislative Victories in 2013!

“From New York to California, employers have been a key partner in the domestic workers movement. Hand in Hand has emerged at a much needed time in history, to organize with love, in partnership with NDWA. Domestic workers are moved by seeing employers working alongside us and raising up the value of this labor.”

– Ai-jen Poo, Director of the National Domestic Workers Alliance

Washington, DC
On September 17, the U.S. Department of Labor made a groundbreaking change to the Fair Labor Standards Act by extending federal minimum wage and overtime laws to home care workers. Hand in Hand, working with the Caring Across Generations Campaign, mobilized our network, including people with disabilities who employ home attendants. Hand in Hand members participated in meetings about these regulations with the National Council on Disability, the White House Office of Management and Budget, and the Secretary of Labor Tom Perez himself.

California
On September 26, Hand in Hand members were honored to be present with the California Domestic Workers Coalition when Governor Jerry Brown signed the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights (AB241) into law. In the years leading up to this landmark victory, employers in our network lobbied alongside workers, marched, spoke with the press, wrote letters, and never gave up believing in the power of our coalition to change hearts and minds.

Hand in Hand members are celebrating this victory for a range of reasons. Thu Phan, who employs home attendants, shared her experience, “...having been able to achieve many of my own goals because of the support I’ve received from home attendants to live independently, I am celebrating the passage of the California Domestic Workers Bill of Rights because I believe that these workers should be able to achieve their goals by gaining the same fairness and dignity that I receive at my job.”

While Carolyn Ji Jong Goossen explains that, “as a working mother, a child of immigrants, and a feminist, I owe so much to the woman who entered our home with grace and experience to do the hard work of helping us raise our children, making it possible for me to go to my own job. I am celebrating this victory in honor of Mirian-- a crucial member of the workforce, and a major contributor to the development of our children.”

"Through both these campaigns, we are helping to create history, by building a movement that says all of our communities can have justice, all of us can be valued, all of us can be treated well, and that employers and workers are going to support each other in this process. Part of me always knew that we would win, because with this kind of strength, collaboration and commitment, of course we are going to get here.”

– Jessica Lehman, member of Hand in Hand National Leadership Team
Bringing it Home
Putting New Laws into Practice

THE DOMESTIC WORKERS MOVEMENT is growing every day. In addition to the victories in New York and California, a new law passed in Hawaii, and there are now Domestic Workers Bill of Rights campaigns in Illinois and Massachusetts. While we gear up to win more statewide campaigns, we also know that legislation is not enough to bring about fair labor practices. Education, resources, and community connection are crucial components to the successful implementation of these new laws. Through innovation and organizing, Hand in Hand aims to reach more employers than ever before.

Online Support
In 2013, we conducted employer focus groups in New York City to learn more about what kinds of everyday services and tools employers need to be the employers they want to be. This research has grounded our work for 2014, helping us develop a new, unique, resource-rich website that will be up and running soon.

“When I hired a part-time nanny for my three-month-old son, I kept going online and doing fruitless searches for the information I needed: not just tax info, but guidance about how to have certain conversations. How to embark on this new relationship. I wanted to know what it means to be a good employer and I wanted help to take the necessary steps. That’s why I’m really excited about our new website, which will explain the new laws, address the real-life scenarios that come up for employers, and provide the practical tools that we all need to figure out wages and work agreements.”
– Gayle Kirshenbaum, Hand in Hand National Leadership Team

Community Support
In 2013, we built support from individuals and community groups for the Code of Care, a campaign that aims to establish a community standard for domestic work in New York. The Code of Care encourages employers to implement the New York Domestic Workers Bill of Rights and adopt additional best practices. As part of this project, we are developing a new organizing and communications strategy which will go into high gear in 2014. We will aim to reach every family, every “new moms” group, every church, synagogue, and preschool, creating an echo chamber that spreads the word about the value of fair workplaces to an entire community—and creates a new norm for domestic employment in New York.

“When I first hired a caregiver 15 years ago and needed guidance, I relied on the park-bench insight of other sleep-deprived moms. My husband and I navigated as best we could with the aim to be fair, but never being sure we were. With the Code of Care, new parents have the opportunity to start out with an understanding that their home is the place of work for another individual. This will serve both parents and caregivers well in the very unique relationship they share.”
– Donna Schneiderman, member of the Hand in Hand / Jews for Racial & Economic Justice Employer Strategy Team
In Dialogue
Domestic Workers and People with Disabilities

In order for domestic workers and people with disabilities to become a powerful force working together for change, Hand in Hand and our partners at Caring Across Generations and the National Domestic Workers Alliance recognize that we need to learn more about each other.

The Olmstead decision: June 22, 2013 marked the 14th anniversary of the Supreme Court’s Olmstead decision, which held that rather than being unnecessarily institutionalized, people with disabilities have the right to live at home and in their communities with appropriate support, including attendants. In recognition of Olmstead, Hand in Hand members and partners in the disability community came together this summer with domestic workers and other allies in Oakland, New York City and Seattle, to learn about ableism and the central role of home attendants in the struggle for the right of people with disabilities to live independently.

“This kind of long-term coalition work creates rich opportunities to keep expanding our analysis. Together we worked to unpack our personal and collective stories about disability and to identify ableism in our lives and our movements for change. Our discussion revealed many of the intersecting struggles of domestic workers, disabled folks, seniors, and the many family members seeking a just and caring economy.”

– Lezlie Frye, Facilitator of the New York City Teach-In with the Eldercare Dialog Project

Thank You

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