

# CENTERING INTERDEPENDENCE: Lessons from Organizing Domestic Employers



HAND IN HAND  
The Domestic Employers Network

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2010, Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers Network (HiH) has been organizing people who hire nannies, house cleaners and home attendants<sup>1</sup> to build a care infrastructure that works for everyone.

We envision a society in which domestic workers are treated with fairness and respect, and individuals who employ domestic workers can access dignified, quality care and support in the home. Working in partnership with the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA), Caring Across Generations and others, HiH is the only organization in the country that aims to reach the people who hire domestic workers.

The central tenet of HiH's organizing is our belief that we are all interdependent. As a network of domestic employers and allies, working in solidarity with workers, we reject the zero-sum game of pitting workers against employers. We know that our collective power

is rooted in an awareness of the systemic devaluing of both labor and care in our society so we engage in political education to organize domestic employers to join our work.

We bring feminist, racial justice and disability justice lenses to our organizing. We understand the ways in which women's labor has long gone unrecognized and uncompensated because of gender inequality. We reckon with the devaluing of the labor of women of color in the domestic work industry as a legacy of slavery. We understand the ways in which white supremacy continues to shape every aspect of the domestic workplace and determines who in society is perceived to be deserving of care. As a society that dehumanizes people with disabilities and renders them invisible, we believe every individual should have their access needs met so they can live their lives fully.

HiH engages in community-based and digital organizing to initiate individual employer behavior change rooted in a systemic

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this document, we will refer to homecare workers, personal care aides and home health workers as "home attendants."



HiH New York City chapter meeting, September 2018.

analysis, then moves employers toward legislative advocacy and broader civic engagement. We have chapters in the San Francisco Bay Area, New York City, Seattle, Philadelphia and New York's Hudson Valley region.

**In our ten years of organizing, we have learned that:**

**We can improve conditions for domestic workers through a combination of policy advocacy and employer education.**

The intimacy that is so often present in employer/worker relationships in the domestic work sector can lead employers to perceive workers as "family members"—not as employees.

Through our national education initiative, *My Home is Someone's Workplace (MHSW)*, we are moving employers toward an understanding that their homes are, indeed, workplaces—a significant paradigm shift that serves as an entry point for implementation of new standards won through Domestic Workers Bills of Rights, and provides a framework for the development of higher community standards for employer practice. Through MHSW, we aim to drive change household by household by supporting employers to engage in the kind of personal transformation that leads to fair and respectful employment practices—as they deepen their understanding of systemic change.

## **We can leverage employer power for dignified labor and affordable care.**

As NDWA has spearheaded efforts to win Domestic Workers Bills of Rights across the country, HiH has organized employers to rally, protest, and lobby legislators in support of these campaigns in New York, California, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Illinois. HiH has also supported the passage of municipal bills in Seattle and Philadelphia.

We have also built a base of strong leaders and strategic campaigns to advocate for affordable longterm care, disability rights, and quality jobs for home attendants. In order to forge new strategic partnerships, we learned that we had to deepen political education for our members and bring workers and employers into conversation. We had to develop a shared analysis that recognizes overlapping forms of oppression as well as the illusion of resource scarcity in our society.

We partner with organizations that work with seniors, people with disabilities, workers, and for

longterm care. Through our work with Caring Across Generations, New York Caring Majority and California Aging and Disability Alliance, we have learned that efforts to win protections for home attendants can be successful when we address both affordability and workers' rights. We are building campaigns to make longterm care supports and services affordable for seniors and people with disabilities while also organizing to make sure care jobs are quality, family-sustaining jobs.

## **We can move employers into movement building.**

HiH's racial justice work has most recently focused on fighting the criminalization of immigrants. We launched the #SanctuaryHomes campaign, to organize employers and allies of domestic workers to support immigrant communities in their homes and neighborhoods. HiH guided employers in how to support targeted immigrant workers and community members through legal referrals, housing, funds, and other forms of assistance for those being released from detention.

HiH also organized domestic employers and allies to take direct action to end family separation and confront Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for its inhumane policies. HiH spearheaded a grassroots, viral effort to support domestic employers and other people of conscience to organize 120 "Playdate Protests" in more than 40 cities across the country, involving families from diverse communities in taking direct action for racial justice. In both of these cases, we were able to mobilize our base in response to a timely crisis, largely because of relationships we had built and an analysis of interdependence that we had helped to foster.

### **We will move forward together.**

In the next decade, HiH will organize to make ethical employment practices widely accepted through our educational and culture change work. We will continue to strengthen and grow our local chapters while building a national base of employers activated to support domestic workers rights. HiH will fight to win

innovative policies and programs that ensure people can age and live with dignity with the support they need, and that the workers who provide this support are valued and protected.

We have moved domestic employers from the kitchen table to the hearing room to the streets. Despite our unpredictable future as a country, we believe our work bolsters economic and racial justice movement building. We believe that we can build transformative relationships with each other across intersections of identity and power. In the end, our interdependence, and more importantly our lived experience of interdependence, is what will enable us to win.

# INTRODUCTION

*“From New York to California, employers have been a key part of 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. In living rooms, legislative hearing rooms, and in the street, employers are telling their stories about the nannies, house cleaners, and home attendants who make their lives possible. They’re helping change the narrative about domestic labor at a pivotal moment. Expanded mobilization of domestic employers—parents, seniors, people with disabilities—across the country will help build the movement we need to pass the National Domestic Workers Bill of Rights.”*

**— Ai-jen Poo, Director of the National Domestic Workers Alliance and Co-Founder of Hand in Hand**

The domestic workplace sits at the nexus of multiple systemic problems including the lack of the social safety net, and the multiple forms of oppression facing workers, people of color, women, immigrants, and people with disabilities. It is where workers, the large majority of whom are women of color and immigrant women, face low pay and lack of protections and benefits. The home itself is also where so many individuals and families struggle to ensure that they can access support or care for themselves and their families.

Since 2010, Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers Network (HiH) has been organizing people who hire nannies, house cleaners, and home attendants to build a care infrastructure that works for everyone—one in which workers are treated with fairness and respect, and individuals who employ workers can access dignified, quality care and support in the home. HiH is the only organization in the country that aims to reach the people who hire domestic workers. There are an estimated 2.7 domestic employers in New York State and 2 million

domestic employer households in California.<sup>2</sup>

We organize to build worker power and a caring economy by bringing our unique lens to organizing and advocacy. The central tenet of HiH's organizing model is our belief that we are all interdependent. As a network of domestic employers and allies working in solidarity with workers, we reject the zero-sum game of pitting employer against worker. We know that our collective power is rooted in an awareness of the systemic devaluing of both labor and care in our society.

We bring a feminist lens to our organizing. HiH understands the ways in which women's labor in the home has long gone unrecognized and uncompensated. Whether pressured *not* to work outside the home, juggling paid or unpaid domestic work with other jobs, all women share the unavoidable struggle with the expectations that patriarchy imposes.

We bring a racial justice lens to our organizing. We reckon with the devaluing of the labor of women

of color in the domestic work industry as a legacy of slavery. We understand the ways in which white supremacy continues to shape every aspect of the domestic workplace and determines who in society is perceived to be deserving of care.

We bring a disability justice lens to our organizing. Patti Berne, a Bay Area disability justice organizer, defines "interdependence" as one of the principles of disability justice, in which, "we meet each other's needs as we build toward liberation" through publicly-funded programs that support independent living for people with disabilities. Within this framework, the support needs of employers with disabilities do not compete with workplace fairness for their attendants. We work towards liberation.

We lift up the ways in which our care infrastructure does not work for most employers: for the middle-aged parents, mostly women, who are juggling to afford care for their children and support for aging parents; for the seniors and people with disabilities who

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<sup>2</sup> *My Home is Someone's Workplace: Re-envisioning Domestic Employment in New York State* (2017) and *Profiles, Practices and Needs of California's Domestic Work Employers* (2016)..

often have to go without care or support given the unaffordability of support and instability of the undervalued domestic workforce. Many employers go into debt in order to qualify for publicly funded programs so they can get the support at home that they need.

Alongside our worker partners, HiH organizes domestic employers with an initial goal of individual employer behavior change in the home. Through meetings in homes and neighborhood institutions conducted by staff and member leaders, we provide employer education and resources to make employers aware of the oppressive systems that influence their practices and change how they manage the relationship to the nanny, house cleaner or home attendant they have hired. We support this community-based organizing with digital organizing, webinars, an active social media presence, blogs, and other tools.

Through online employer education, our fair care practices have reached more than 200,000 people, and through both online and community-based outreach, engaged 8,000 in more substantive education, advocacy training, or leadership development. We have

worked to engage a percentage of workshop attendees in our campaigns to become active in our local chapters in the San Francisco Bay Area, New York City, Philadelphia, Seattle, and New York's Hudson Valley region.

These campaigns engage our members in local, state and national advocacy to advance workers' rights legislation and policy proposals to grow our care infrastructure. We support our members in recognizing that this advocacy is embedded in broader struggles for racial and economic justice, and human rights.

After ten years of organizing in this sector, we have compiled this report to describe our campaigns, assess our impact, and distill what we've learned. We believe that there are powerful lessons to be gleaned from our experiences with storytelling, political education, and organizing campaigns that embody solidarity across difference and power differentials. We hope these reflections can inform and inspire conversations that will help our movements as we collectively pave the path towards a transformative vision of a nation that cares for all.

## DOMESTIC EMPLOYERS: Education Toward Accountability

*"Tell everyone you know how hard it is to navigate the care crisis in your family. How overwhelmed you are with managing adequate care for an aging parent or for your children or both. Talk about what kind of guidance you need. Know that you are not alone... Tell the worker in your home or in the home of a family member how much you value their work. And then consider whether their pay matches your words."*

— **Gayle Kirshenbaum, founding member of Hand in Hand and former nanny employer**

While the labor of domestic workers forms the backbone of many families' and communities' well-being—and therefore of our economy—our society devalues and renders this labor invisible. Many domestic workers are denied fair pay and lack basic benefits such as overtime, sick time, and paid leave. Working in private homes, they are vulnerable to daily abuse. Domestic workers are often unable to financially support themselves and their families. This inequity is gendered and racialized, with the large majority of the 2.5 million domestic workers<sup>3</sup> in the United States being women, and disproportionately women of color and immigrant women. These

unjust working conditions are rooted in the historical exclusion of this workforce from basic labor protections. In the 1930s, southern lawmakers kept domestic workers and farmworkers—a majority African American workforce—excluded from labor laws created under the New Deal.

The National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) organizes nannies, house cleaners and home attendants around the country to win respect and dignity for their work, and to shift the narrative about labor in the home. As a partner to NDWA and local domestic worker organizations, HiH organizes domestic employers

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<sup>3</sup> NDWA website, 2020.

to advance both culture change and policy change that recognizes that this is the work that makes all other work possible.

Who is a domestic employer? While there are agencies that employ and then deploy domestic workers to private homes, HiH defines a "domestic employer" as anyone who manages a worker in their home, including individuals hiring through agencies and those who pay workers directly. The identity of "domestic employer" is significant in that it moves individuals and families who hire workers in their homes to recognize that they are entering into a formal employment relationship and that cleaning, cooking, bathing and caregiving is labor that deserves to be valued, respected, and protected like all other work.

A domestic employer can be a wealthy family hiring a full-time nanny; a fixed-income senior employing a housecleaner who increasingly takes on more personal care tasks; a low-income millennial with a disability learning how to be a home care employer while navigating the bureaucracies of longterm care agencies and publiclyfunded programs; or a middle-aged child managing her parents' long term, round-the-clock support by multiple home attendants while caring for her own children.

While employers at one end of the spectrum subject workers in their homes to extreme abuse and exploitation, at the other end are employers who want to do the right thing, but don't know what that looks like. HiH works to provide guidance and education to these employers to create ethical working relationships and join our broader movements for justice.



*HiH Steering Committee Leader Nikki Brown-Booker speaking at the NDWA State of the Union event in Washington DC, January 2018.*

# IMPACT: Recognizing Our Homes as Workplaces

HiH's national education initiative, *My Home Is Someone's Workplace (MHSW)*, involves large scale engagement of domestic employers to improve conditions for domestic workers in the home.

The My Homes is Someone's Workplace (MHSW) initiative gives employers a new lens through which to view the domestic workplace by providing education about how to improve employment practices in the home, and political education about racial, gender, immigrant, disability and economic justice.

Through community-based and online workshops, MHSW focuses on three Fair Care practices: fair pay, paid time off and effective communication. Employers are invited to consider what their own expectations are in a job—how they want their work and time to be valued. Through this reflection process, employers come to understand the importance of creating a fair working agreement, and realize the value of clear guidelines.

## FAIR CARE PLEDGE

The MHSW initiative is anchored by the Fair Care Pledge, which is a platform for employers to commit to “high road” employer practices such as providing fair pay, paid time off, and clear job expectations. In 2014, HiH partnered with NDWA and Care.com to launch the Fair Care Pledge at the Clinton Global Initiative. At a White House convening on the Future of Work, President Barack Obama lauded the pledge as a “new tool to bring people together in today’s economy.” To date, over 200,000 people have signed the Fair Care Pledge due to this partnership—a first step toward moving employers to make different choices.

MHSW also names the history and systems of oppression that have shaped this industry and their own experiences. We point to the laws rooted in white supremacy and to the economic systems that

have pushed employers to seek affordability over dignity. We lift up our core values of disability rights and justice. Domestic employers with disabilities face unique challenges because, while they hold power as the person managing or hiring a worker, they are vulnerable to mistreatment and exclusion because of systemic ableism and discrimination against people with disabilities.

Everyone who goes through MHSW comes out of it with a

deeper understanding of their identity as an employer and what it means to be a Fair Care employer. A portion of domestic employers who through MHSW take it to the next level by joining HiH campaigns to win protections for domestic workers, to end the historical exclusion of this workforce from workplace protections and to work toward building a care infrastructure in our society that ensures access to care for those who need it and values the workers who provide it.

*HiH member Monique Harris at the Free Our Future mobilization in San Diego, July 2018.*



## WHAT WILL IT TAKE: Ensuring That Employers Change Their Behavior

We know that with education and a desire to do the right thing, domestic employers will sign the Fair Care Pledge. We know that some of them will start to make different choices in their homes. What we don't yet know is what are the most effective strategies to ensure that pledges—and even new domestic workers rights laws—will result in significant and lasting employer behavior change and widespread improvements in the lives of domestic workers.

In 2019, we launched a study to evaluate the impact of MHSW and our other educational tools. Through conducting pre- and post-surveys with new domestic employers who participate in our programs or download our online resources, we aim to identify what participants take away from our educational work and how their employment practices change. Our goal is to complete the study in 2020 to evaluate the impact of our programs.

The establishment of the California Domestic Worker Rights Outreach and Education Fund, which we helped to win in 2019, will increase investment in worker and employer education efforts to raise awareness about the California Domestic Workers Bill of Rights. Over the next decade, as more legislative initiatives to raise standards and protections are introduced around the country, including a National Domestic Workers Bill of Rights, HiH will continue to grow our base of domestic employers who model Fair Care practices; to expand our educational initiatives; and to evaluate our tactics to identify the most effective ways of changing the behaviors of domestic employers and moving them toward the broader movement for workers rights, justice, and dignity.

## DOMESTIC EMPLOYER RESEARCH

We have more data from a survey of employers in New York State that HiH conducted in partnership with Fordham University and the Worker Institute at Cornell. We learned that although nearly one in five households in New York State hires a domestic worker, less than one-third of employers (29%), know about the New York Domestic Workers Bill of Rights. We also learned that most employers hire directly, setting job terms such as pay, schedule and time off. And of those employers, only six percent rely on government sources of information or online sources of various kinds to learn about their obligations as employers.

Based on a similar study of employers in California conducted by UCLA Labor Center (2016), a survey for which HiH served as a project partner, we estimate that there are as many as two million households in California that hire domestic workers. The majority of California employers hire and pay the worker directly, with 11% using government programs such as In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) that handle worker pay and working agreements. Similar to the New York survey, the California survey found that the majority of employers created the terms of employment on their own or through informal advice from friends. Both surveys demonstrate the need for clear guidelines and education for employers and workers about labor standards.

## ONE STORY: FLORA & NAMRATA

Flora Margolis lives with her husband and two children in Brooklyn. As a clinical social worker with years of experience providing counseling for pregnant women, new parents and couples struggling through the early parenting years, Flora knows well that networks of support are a critical part of raising young children. That's why she is deeply grateful to employ Namrata Pradhan as a nanny to her children.

Namrata was a lawyer in her native city of Kathmandu, Nepal, where her practice of family law led her to do grassroots community work with women at a non-governmental organization.

When Namrata immigrated to New York, and found that her credentials as a lawyer were not honored in the U.S, she turned to childcare as a profession. At her first job interviews she would tell the employers that she had practiced law, but no one seemed to want to hire her. "In order to get jobs, I had to fit into people's picture of what I should be," Namrata explained. "People didn't want a highly educated



*Namrata Pradhan and Flora Margolis*

person, they just wanted you to work as a donkey." Finally, Namrata secured a nanny position with a family, and ended up working with them for eight years.

It was during this time that Namrata became a member of Adhikaar, a women led non-profit in Queens that organizes Nepali-speaking communities. She also became more involved at NDWA, serving as a representative on their national board of directors. "As I began organizing with others in my community—nannies, like me, cooks, elder caregivers, and others—I knew that we needed to work together to improve the situation of women doing domestic work."

Namrata left her previous job and found the opportunity with Flora, who interviewed her shortly after her daughter was born in

2012. They felt an immediate connection. Flora explained, "I was so grateful that she had all this life experience, big aspirations, and diverse interests. It showed us that she was well-rounded."

Flora's desire to be a responsible employer stems from her deep appreciation for Namrata's work as a caregiver. "It's so hard to put into words the value of what she does for us." Because of Flora's work supporting mothers, she had always been sensitive to the question of parents who were struggling with the process of hiring a nanny, without any guidance on what to do. Her own experience was one of wanting to value Namrata's

work and honor the relationship, recognizing that her relationship with the person caring for her children would be one of the most important relationships in her life. Hand in Hand's resources helped Flora ensure that she was doing the best she could as an employer. Flora explains, "People are starting to see what's happening to low-wage workers and immigrants, and want to do something to help. For many of us employers, treating the person who works in your home with dignity is how you can have an impact."

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*Excerpt from "My Home is Someone's Workplace: Re-envisioning Domestic Employment in New York State" (2017).*

# INTERDEPENDENCE IN ACTION: Leveraging Employer Power for Dignified Labor and Affordable Care

*"I believe in closing the gap on income inequality. We ignore this workforce at our peril. Domestic workers, and those who work in and around the home, are one of the most undervalued segments of the American labor population. The work they do cannot be outsourced to technology, and if we don't create some basic protections and framework for them now, our economy will collectively suffer in the future."*

— Emily Dills, Seattle, nanny employer

HiH was founded in 2010, forged by the close partnership between Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ) and Domestic Workers United (DWU) as part of the campaign to pass the New York Domestic Workers Bill of Rights. JFREJ engaged synagogues to galvanize domestic employers to support the campaign, bringing them to the state capitol to testify about the value of workers' labor to their families and the need for workplace standards to provide clarity for employers. Employers insisted that lawmakers recognize the care needs affecting so many families in the state and the confusion and isolation they experienced trying to manage it.

After years of lobbying by domestic workers and employers, the historic New York Domestic Workers Bill of Rights was passed in 2010. That victory gave way to the founding of Hand in Hand, with its first chapter in

New York and a plan to implement our organizing model across the country.

As HiH established its second chapter in the San Francisco Bay Area, we worked closely with local domestic worker partners through the California Domestic Workers Coalition (CDWC) and organized domestic employers to support workers in their efforts to win statewide protections. HiH inspired dozens of domestic employers in California, including nanny employers and people with disabilities hiring home attendants, to participate in "living room conversations," deepening their relationships and providing political education as they prepared to tell their stories in the state capitol in support of protections for workers. In 2013, the Governor signed the nation's second Domestic Workers Bill of Rights into law.

# IMPACT: Employers Advocate for Domestic Workers Bills of Rights

As NDWA has spearheaded efforts to win Domestic Workers Bills of Rights across the country, HiH has organized employers to join these campaigns. In addition to New York and California, HiH members have rallied, protested, and lobbied legislators to pass statewide Domestic Workers Bills of Rights in Massachusetts (2014), Connecticut (2015), and Illinois (2016), which were historic victories for hundreds of thousands of domestic workers.

Most recently in Seattle and Philadelphia, HiH engaged domestic employers to support the passage of the first two municipal Domestic Workers Bills of Rights. In Seattle, HiH surveyed domestic employers, who expressed support for creating protections for the 33,000 domestic workers in the city. Working with the Seattle Domestic Workers Alliance, HiH members testified at city

hearings and shared their stories with the local media about the support homecare and childcare workers provide to their families. The Seattle Domestic Workers Ordinance was signed in 2018.

In 2019, HiH joined with the Pennsylvania Domestic Workers Alliance to win the Philadelphia Domestic Workers Bill of Rights. Acknowledging the need for basic rights and benefits for the workers in their homes, domestic employers supported the inclusion of paid sick leave and paid time off through a portable benefits program.

Both municipal laws also include an innovative solution to the challenges domestic workers face to organize and collectively bargain: creating community boards to ensure the participation of domestic workers and employers in discussions about policy development and implementation.

These municipal and state-level efforts to win protections for domestic workers have laid the groundwork for creating federal legislation. In 2019, Senator Kamala Harris (D-CA) and Representative Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) introduced the National Domestic Workers Bill of Rights. The bill seeks to include domestic

workers in all federal labor and civil rights laws and to introduce new rights that are specific to the domestic workforce. HiH will seek to engage our state member leaders, activate new members, and expand our capacity to mobilize employers around the country to pass this landmark legislation.

*HiH and California Domestic Workers Coalition leaders in Sacramento, CA, August 2018.*



# IMPACT: Tackling Workers' Rights and Affordability Together

As HiH began to organize employers in California for the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights Campaign, employers with disabilities shared the challenges facing many low-income and middle-income attendant employers.

These challenges included a very real concern that overtime pay for workers, the heart of the proposed Bill of Rights legislation, could leave attendant employers without the support they needed to live in their homes and communities. This tension moved HiH toward deeper engagement with seniors and people with disabilities and toward an agenda that addresses affordability in tandem with workers' rights. It has been essential to ensure that workers are not pitted against low-income and middle-income domestic employers—but instead, together build connection and harness mutual self-interest to seek solutions in a new, care-oriented

economy. We share and promote a vision of an interdependent society, in which needing help does not make you less valuable, and in which we all get our needs met, workers and people with disabilities alike.

According to our New York employer survey, 70 percent of those who employ homecare workers say that, if cost were not a factor, they believe their provider deserves higher pay.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, our California study found that two-thirds of employers would like to pay higher wages.<sup>5</sup> Without financial support, homecare employers have few options: to pay a lower wage contributing to an already undervalued workforce; to forgo the care they need; or to go into debt so they can qualify for publicly funded programs.

Through this learning, we have built a base of strong leaders and strategic campaigns to advocate for affordable long-term care, fight

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<sup>4</sup> *My Home is Someone's Workplace* (2017).

<sup>5</sup> *Profiles, Practices and Needs of California's Domestic Work Employers* (2016).

for disability rights, and create good jobs for homecare workers and home attendants. Among others, we have partnered with Caring Across Generations, a national organization committed to winning policies that ensure people can age with dignity, and their caregivers are supported and respected.

## In California:

In 2017, we joined with worker, senior and disability organizations to win \$1.65 million from the city and county of San Francisco to fund Support at Home, an innovative program that provides subsidies for middle-income seniors and people with

*HiH with the New York Caring Majority, November 2019.*



disabilities who do not qualify for publicly funded home care. The program addresses affordability of care while simultaneously creating good jobs for workers. We are currently participating in conversations about expanding the program to other cities or regions of the state.

In 2019, as a part of the California Aging and Disability Alliance , HiH and the California Domestic Workers Coalition joined the effort to win one million dollars in the state budget to conduct a study of how to expand Longterm Services and Supports (LTSS) statewide. HiH members testified in Sacramento at hearings and shared their stories with the media to amplify the issues facing both domestic employers and workers.

### **In New York:**

HiH and JFREJ co-convene the New York Caring Majority (NYCM), a statewide coalition organizing to win affordable long-term care for all who need it and significant investment in the home care

workforce. Responding to the unprecedented elder boom—with the estimated number of Americans aged 65 and older more than doubling from 2010 to 2050<sup>6</sup>—NYCM is organizing to build a sustainable and just care infrastructure for all New Yorkers. It will allow New Yorkers to access and afford dignified home care, while also supporting the homecare workers whose work allows seniors and people with disabilities to live healthy and independent lives.

Demonstrating the power of the caring majority, in 2018, HiH and the NYCM won the inclusion of long-term care in the New York State Health Act. The win was a result of the grassroots leadership of both employers and workers whose testimonies demonstrated both people with disabilities' and seniors' need for care. Currently, HiH is also organizing with workers and employers to win a Home Care Jobs and Innovation Fund for New York State, to invest in projects that improve conditions for home care workers.

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<sup>6</sup> U.S. Census, 2010.

# MOVING INTERSECTIONAL ORGANIZING: Beyond the Domestic Workplace

Interdependence, as a core value, means that violence against and exploitation of any family or community harms all of us. HiH has practiced this value through actions in support of Black Lives Matter, Dreamers, and people seeking asylum from Central America.

Most recently, HiH's racial justice work has focused on fighting the criminalization of immigrants. Not long after the Trump administration began targeting people of color and immigrants, we were moved by the number of employers from around the country who reached out to us for guidance on how they could

support immigrant workers in their homes and communities.

In response, we launched the #SanctuaryHomes campaign, which supported employers and allies of domestic workers to support immigrant communities in their homes and neighborhoods. Through online resources, webinars, and one-on-one staff support, HiH guided employers in how to support targeted immigrant workers and community members through legal referrals for those fearing deportation, and volunteer circles to provide housing, funds and other forms of assistance for those being released from detention.

*Playdate Protest nurse-in action at the New Jersey offices of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, June 2018.*



# IMPACT: “Playdate Protests” Amplify Outrage over Family Separation

As a result of the #SanctuaryHomes campaign, domestic employers and allies joined forces to take direct action in support of immigrant communities—to end family separation and confront Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for its inhumane policies.

HiH spearheaded a grassroots, viral effort to support domestic employers and other people of conscience to organize “Playdate Protests” across the country, involving families from diverse communities in taking direct action for racial justice and against family separation.

We organized the first Playdate Protest at the ICE offices in New York City in June 2018. We live-streamed the action on social media, attracting over five million views. Over the following year and half, HiH members and new supporters, many who had never planned a protest before, organized 120 Playdate Protests—direct actions with children central to each event—in over 40 cities

## PLAYDATE PROTESTS

In 2019, HiH members organized Playdate Protests as a part of the Families Belong Together Coalition, which forced Wells Fargo, JP Morgan Chase, SunTrust and other major multinational banks to divest from private detention corporations. In September 2019, an article in Forbes Magazine declared that GEO Group, a private detention corporation targeted by the campaign, lost all of its “publicly known existing banking partners,” highlighting the power of public pressure and direct action on multinational financial institutions.

across the country. The actions enabled HiH members to make the connection between their values as Fair Care employer families and the value of taking to the streets to combat our country's brutal immigration policies.



*Playdate Protest in Oakland, July 2018.*

## WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

### **Home by home: We can improve conditions for workers through employer education and policy change**

The household stress and intimacy that is part of domestic labor can lead employers to perceive workers as “family members”—not as employees. While there can be profound and lasting connection between workers and employer families, the informality of the “family member” designation can make it very difficult for workers to set clear boundaries, request time off, or ask for a raise.

We've had success in moving employers toward an understanding that their homes are, indeed, workplaces. This is a significant paradigm shift that serves as an entry point for implementation of new standards won through Domestic Workers

Bills of Rights as well as provides a framework for the development of higher community standards for employer practice. Through My Home is Someone's Workplace, we have seen that driving change, household by household by supporting employers to engage in the kind of personal transformation that leads to fair and respectful employer practices not only works, it also results in a subset of employers engaging in the work for systemic change.

### **Workers and employers can reject the zero-sum game**

In order to forge new strategic partnerships, we learned that we had to deepen political education for our members and bring workers and employers into conversation. We had to develop a shared analysis that recognizes the illusion of resource scarcity in our society and overlapping forms of oppression. Our campaigns target the failings of our safety net,

highlighting the ways that seniors and people with disabilities and the workers who support them are forced into adversarial positions by this system.

Just as many employers have little understanding of domestic workers' history, many workers don't know about the disability rights and justice movement and the discrimination that their employers with disabilities face. HiH has provided workshops to our domestic worker partners at NDWA and locally to engage attendants and homecare workers in conversations about the abuse people with disabilities have experienced on individual, interpersonal, and systemic levels. As we engage workers in our campaigns for affordable and dignified care, they understand the shared experience of inequity and injustice.

In our campaigns, we will continue to organize to win public investment in a care workforce to make these essential jobs respected, quality jobs, while organizing to ensure everyone can access and afford the longterm care they need to live and age with dignity.

## Out of the home and into the street: We can move employers into movement building

According to Alicia Garza, co-founder of the Black Lives Matter Network and Special Projects Director at NDWA, co-conspirators are people who "take responsibility for the power that [they] hold to transform our conditions."<sup>6</sup> More than allies, they are courageous in speaking out about what may not directly affect them.

Through our experience with the #SanctuaryHomes campaign and Playdate Protests, we witnessed domestic employers and allies move from their kitchen tables into the street. The outrageous treatment of people seeking asylum—particularly women and children—ignited domestic employers into leadership to organize their friends and families to directly pressure our government agencies and corporate targets. This is classic direct action organizing—with HiH training new leaders as co-conspirators with immigrants and within our broader social movements across the country to confront those with institutional power.

## CONCLUSION

HiH's organizing model was designed to help people recognize that the personal is, indeed, the political.

HiH is a powerful organization in that we embody and are experimenting with the kind of connective tissue that can strengthen community organizing and movement building across sectors. We are a small organization that works in multiple spaces—the home, the hearing room, the street—aiming to respond to the diverse experiences and needs of our members, as we continue to organize in solidarity with the domestic workers movement.

Moving into the next decade, HiH will be working to expand our reach to domestic employers and the broader public to change the narrative around domestic work and care in our country. We will make Fair Care and ethical

employment practices widely accepted through our educational and culture change work. We will continue to build our local chapters and a national base of employers activated to support domestic workers rights. HiH will fight to win innovative policies and programs that ensure people can age and live with dignity, and that the workers who provide the support are valued and protected.

HiH believes in the power and potential of engaging all stakeholders in creating caring and resilient communities—including domestic employers. We help our members to move out of isolation, build connection and take courageous action towards building the world that we want. Although we live in extraordinarily divided times, we believe that we can build transformative relationships with each other across intersections of identity and power in recognition of our interdependence and because of it, we will win.

**Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers Network (HiH)** is a national network of employers of nannies, house cleaners and home attendants, our families and allies, who believe that dignified and respectful working conditions benefit worker and employer alike. We envision a future where people live in caring communities that recognize all of our interdependence. To get there, we support employers to improve their employment practices, and to collaborate with workers to change cultural norms and public policies that bring dignity and respect to domestic workers and all of our communities.



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*Front cover photos: Leader Allie Cannington at membership event in Oakland, December 2019 (L), and PDWA and HiH Philadelphia members working to win the Philadelphia Domestic Workers Bill of Rights, May 2019 (R).*

*Photos below: Playdate Protests in Oakland, July 2018 (L), and in San Francisco, February 2019 (R).*

