



Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 668: An Act Concerning a Fair Work Week

**Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut
February 18, 2021**

Thank you, chairs and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee, for the opportunity to express our support for Senate Bill 668: An Act Concerning a Fair Work Week.

At Universal Health Care Foundation, we envision a health system that is accountable and responsive to the people it serves, and that supports our health, takes excellent care of all of us when we are sick, at a cost that doesn't threaten our financial security. We believe that health outcomes should not be affected based upon income, gender, race, language of preference, status, or geography. We support this bill because a fair work week reduces the physical, emotional, and financial stressors associated with an uncertain work schedule.

In Connecticut, nearly 239,000 residents work as hourly employees in the retail and wholesale trades.ⁱ Of service sector workers, 65% report irregular work schedules, 50% work closing-to-opening shifts, and 25% work on-call.ⁱⁱ Further, 71% report that their unpredictable work schedule causes extra stress for their family and 72% report that their schedule can make it hard to meet caregiving responsibilities.ⁱⁱ

This unpredictability is not by choice: most hourly workers, 74%, would prefer more predictable schedules.ⁱⁱ When their hours change each week, as reported by 37%, workers do not know their pay in advance.ⁱⁱ This uncertainty creates financial stress, makes it impossible to secure a second job, and does not enable low-wage workers to pursue a higher degree or professional license.

Schedule instability is associated with both mental and physical health problems. Unpredictability can exacerbate stress levels and lead to depression and anxiety. These conditions are problematic in themselves and can also aggravate physical health problems.ⁱⁱⁱ Smoking, lack of exercise, obesity, diabetes, and elevated heart disease risk are all associated with shift work.^{iv} Sleep patterns are frequently disrupted among these workers, with 20-30% of shift workers affected by insomnia.ⁱⁱⁱ People of color and women are disproportionately affected by schedule instability, due to being over represented in the service sector, creating physical and mental health disparities.ⁱⁱⁱ

Of workers in the service sector, one-third are parents of dependent children who are also adversely affected by unpredictable work schedules. Parents may be unable to

secure high-quality, formal childcare resulting in informal arrangements that change on a regular basis. These inconsistent routines can negatively affect a child's development, leading to underdeveloped verbal communication and problem-solving skills and increased levels of anxiety and aggression.^{vi}

This bill is necessary to reduce the physical and emotional harms created by unpredictable work schedules. It requires that employers have a 14-day notice period, ensures that employees have 11 hours of rest between shifts, and creates predictability pay if scheduled hours are reduced. Employers must make a good faith effort to honor the work hours desired by employees and gives employees the right to decline hours scheduled without the notice period. These provisions reduce the uncertainty associated with hourly work and give employees greater autonomy over their schedules.

Fair work week legislation has been passed in Oregon, New York City, Seattle, San Francisco, San Jose. Similar legislation is being considered in other states, including New York and California.^{vii} We urge you to support this bill to improve the physical health and well-being of hourly workers and their families. Thank you.

Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut's mission is to serve as a catalyst that engages residents and communities in shaping a democratic health system that provides universal access to quality, affordable, equitable health care and promotes health in Connecticut. We believe that health care is a fundamental right and that our work is part of a broader movement for social and economic justice.

ⁱ Connecticut Department of Labor. (2021, January 25). *State of Connecticut employment: Current employment statistics (CES)*. <https://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmi/ces/nfstatcm.asp>

ⁱⁱ Schneider, D. & Harknett, K. (2018). *Working in the service sector in Connecticut*. The SHIFT Project. <https://irle.berkeley.edu/working-in-the-service-sector-in-connecticut/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Harknett, K. & Schneider, D. (2020, February 13). *Precarious work schedules and population health*. Health Affairs. <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hpb20200206.806111/full/#:~:text=Exposure%20to%20unstable%20and%20unpredictable,increased%20psychological%20distress%20in%20adults>

^{iv} Bushnell, P.T., Colombi, A., Caruso, C.C., & Tak, S. (2009). Work schedules and health behavior outcomes at a large manufacturer. *Industrial Health*, 48, 395-405.

^v Kiranmala, K., Aslam, M., Mishra, B. K., Jhamb, R., & Madhu, S. V. (2019). Association of postprandial triglyceride responses with insulin resistance among rotational night shift healthcare workers. *Experimental Physiology*, 104(6), 819-825.

^{vi} Harknett, K., Schneider, D., & Luhr, S. (2019). *Who care if parents have unpredictable work schedules? The association between just-in-time work schedules and child care arrangements*. Washington Center for Equitable Growth. <https://equitablegrowth.org/working-papers/who-cares-if-parents-have-unpredictable-work-schedules-the-association-between-just-in-time-work-schedules-and-child-care-arrangements/>

^{vii} Wolfe, J., Jones, J., & Cooper, D. (2018, July 19). "Fair Workweek" laws help more than 1.8 million workers. Economic Policy Institute. <https://www.epi.org/publication/fair-workweek-laws-help-more-than-1-8-million-workers/>