

Shalom Bayit: Justice for Domestic Workers
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
For Employers of Domestic Workers

Overview about the campaign:

This campaign aims to bring a discussion into a public space that is often isolated in individual homes. It aims to support workers, but also to support employers. Decisions about employment are intimate and complicated choices. This campaign aims for employers to support each other to figure out how to make decisions that reflect their Jewish and secular values. The campaign also aims for employers who see domestic workers justice as in their personal interest and value-system to help work towards systemic solutions that will bring dignity and respect to this critical workforce.

This issue is bigger than each individual experience. There is a global and historical context for the domestic work industry and the discrimination and exploitation domestic workers face (foreign policy that creates poverty in developing countries and forces migration, and domestic policies that are anti-immigrant, anti-worker, racist, sexist, etc). It is important to fight for standards (the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights) so it isn't up to each employer. This is good for both worker and employer as it will provide guidelines about how to create a positive working relationship. The Bill of Rights will be one step in a public acknowledgment that domestic workers represent a real and critical workforce that deserves the same treatment as workers in similar industries.

I can't afford to do everything the Bill of Rights advocates, can I still be involved?

The *Shalom Bayit: Justice for Domestic Workers Campaign* recognizes that not every employer will fulfill every aspect of the Bill of Rights right away. We also know that whatever employment practices an employer has now, everyone can move in the right direction by making a concrete improvement in your employment practices. A lot of this is made possible by opening up communication with the domestic worker you employ – negotiating a written contract, setting up evaluation periods for feedback from/to employer and DW, etc. Everyone can take 'one step up'. By professionalizing these relationships, you show value for the work and help bring dignity and respect to domestic workers. Of course, this issue is bigger than each individual experience. It is important to fight for standards by supporting the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights

I'm already a good employer, how can I help?

That's great! You can help by talking to your friends, family, and other employers about why you have good employment practices and work to implement the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights as one step in a public acknowledgment that domestic workers represent a real and critical workforce that deserves the same treatment as workers in similar industries. Additionally, whatever employment practices you have now, you can usually still take one step up making one concrete improvement. By professionalizing these relationships, you show value for the work and help bring dignity and respect to domestic workers.

I only employ someone part-time, how can I help?

You can still take "one step up" by making concrete improvements in your employment practices and you can join JFREJ's *Shalom Bayit: Justice for Domestic Workers* campaign and help pass legislation to support all domestic workers in New York State.

I don't get health insurance from my job, how can I be expected to provide it to the domestic worker/s I employ?

DWU and JFREJ have the larger long-term vision that health care should be free for everyone, but we're not there yet. A lot of people do not receive health care, but that does not mean it's right. As employers, it is your responsibility to provide health coverage for those you employ. If you

cannot provide insurance right now, then DWU advocates you provide a \$2/hr wage supplement. Some employers and workers have found other creative solutions that work on a situation-by-situation basis, like providing money for a certain number of doctor's visits per year or procedures up to a certain amount of money. The most important part is that you communicate with and be responsible about the health care of those who you employ in your home.

What if I employ someone who is here illegally?

First, a note on language. Although the US immigration favors people with more money and people from Western Europe, most people immigrate because they have to – because of war, violence, persecution, and poverty. So while many immigrants do come here undocumented (particularly low-income immigrants from Asia, Africa, Mexico, Latin America, and the Caribbean), no human being should be considered illegal. It is not wrong to employ an undocumented person – the work conditions are what matters.

Many of the workers in Domestic Workers United are immigrants (documented and undocumented) and they designed this campaign. Legally, all workers are entitled to certain labor protections (including minimum wage and overtime), whether they are documented or not. DWU and JFREJ organize for rights of ALL workers and do not distinguish between documented and undocumented immigrants. The DW Bill of Rights would cover ALL workers. And moreover, ALL domestic workers deserve dignity and respect. Again, this is a part of a larger movement for workers rights and immigrant and gender justice.

Why aren't domestic workers unionizing like other workers?

First of all, the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) which guarantees employees the right to organize excludes domestic workers from the definition of "employee" and domestic workers are therefore unable to form labor unions.

Also, domestic workers, as defined by DWU, are individual workers who work in individual homes and are employed by individual employers, not by government agencies. There is usually one employee for every one or two employers and there is thus, no "collective" to bargain with. That's why the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights provides a comprehensive set of standards that comparable workforces would receive through an ongoing collective bargaining process for a fair contract.

The Domestic Workers Bill of Rights seems really big. What is the reasoning behind it?

See DWU and JFREJ Legislative Talking Points & FAQs

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