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PRESENTATION TO LAW AMENDMENTS COMMITTEE ON BILL 203 - LABOUR STANDARDS CODE

OCTOBER 20, 2022

Earlier this week, on the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, the Nova Scotia Action Coalition for Community Well-Being launched a new campaign Poverty is a Political Choice. Dalhousie Legal Aid Service is one of the member organizations of the Coalition.

The Coalition is bringing attention to the fact that poverty has been legislated into existence through programs, policy and legislative approaches that we know are inadequate to bring families and people above the poverty line. This bill provides an opportunity to correct one of those political choices that force thousands of Nova Scotians to live in poverty.

Income security, food security, housing security and access to supports and services are all impacted by the provision of paid leave for all workers.

Protected leave for employees who experience a pregnancy that does not end in a live birth is very important. Pregnancies ending in outcomes other than a live birth have significant impacts - blood loss, surgery, trauma and grief. It should absolutely be expected that workers in Nova Scotia have their jobs protected while they take time to recover. However, if this leave is unpaid then it is really only available to some people and not all.

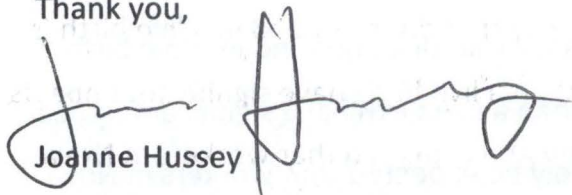
If the government chooses to pass this bill without amendments they will effectively be saying to low wage workers, to those struggling to keep up with the rent and the grocery bills, that

they are not entitled to the same protections as those who can afford to go without 5 days pay. Socio-economic status should not determine your ability to access the protections provided in the Labour Standards Code. However, that is the effect of creating protections that are only available to those who can pay in the form of lost wages. Unfortunately that is currently the case in Nova Scotia for pregnancy leave, parental leave, bereavement leave, court leave, compassionate care leave, critically ill child care leave, and sick leave - all of which are unpaid leave under our Labour Standards.

Low wage workers make up $\frac{1}{4}$ of the workforce in Nova Scotia - that's about 128,000 people who can seldom afford to take unpaid time off work. Amending this bill to provide protected paid leave for people experiencing pregnancies that do not end in live births has no cost to government. Based on evidence from jurisdictions that have legislated paid sick leave, legislated paid sick days have little to no effect on overall business costs.

More importantly, supporting that amendment will demonstrate an understanding that the choices you make here about the Labour Standards Code have a direct impact on who is falling behind on their rent, and who is standing in line at the food bank, and who has the warm coat they need for the winter.

Thank you,



Joanne Hussey

Community Legal Worker

Dalhousie Legal Aid Service