

My name is Dr. Eileen Mary Condon, and I wish to speak as a New York City immigrant nonprofit worker, advocating for immigrants' rights by working pro bono as a grant writer and communications/development assistant for the last seven years with Brooklyn-based Domestic Workers United, a worker-led nonprofit advocating for nannies, elder caregivers, and cleaners in NYC, and by working more recently/simultaneously, as a Navigator for the Excluded Workers Fund and Program Case Manager at the Emerald Isle Immigration Center, based in Queens and the Bronx. I am an academically trained ethnographer, introduced to the women in Domestic Workers United in 2015 by virtue of a self-collection of work stories project, funded by the American Folklife Center's Archie Green Fellowship. Working with the women of DWU on that occupational narrative collection changed my life forever, creating in me a fervent desire to see justice done for domestic workers, who are organizing themselves for fairer labor standards and better working conditions in New York State and nationally. The Caribbean Black women leaders of Domestic Workers United, and the organizers of the FEW Coalition as well, are my s/heroes, my teachers, and my mentors and I offer this statement in support of their work.

I wish to describe the ways in which I have over the last 7 years witnessed the Caribbean Black women who lead and belong to Domestic Workers United share the nature of their work, to demonstrate the "essential" nature of this work as paid care work. My work with DWU as an ally and advocate is grounded not only in my training as an ethnographer, to recognize and collect occupational narratives--stories of work--but also in my memory of my own relatives' need to do domestic work in the United States upon their own arrival from Ireland in generations past. My grandmother and her five sisters worked as domestic workers in New York and my great-grandmother mother came to New York from New Ross, Wexford, as an indentured servant to an English family who resided in Yonkers and Queens. Domestic work -- whether nannying, caring for elders, or cleaning homes, is women's work. It is immigrants' work, and it is essential work. It is one of the varieties of work that makes all other work possible, freeing parents and children up to do other forms of work without having to worry about simultaneously watching their children or their parents at all times. As the recent case of [Celi Muschamp](#) has shown us here in NYC, nannies serve as children's first responders every day when they are in their care. Celi Muschamp's last conscious act on December 20th was to push the child in her care, in a stroller, out of the way of an oncoming vehicle at a Brooklyn street crossing. She did not survive, passing away weeks later in the hospital, and her heartbroken family and employers resorted to raising money for her care through a GoFundMe campaign. Recent conversations among the members of Domestic Workers United demonstrated to me that such acts are performed many times by many nannies in the course of their often lengthy careers providing childcare to families in NYC and State.

One of the leaders of DWU described having put out a fire in the course of her nannying job--braving the flames coming out of an oven (in which employers had carelessly left a cardboard box in its bottom compartment, starting the fire) to turn the oven off, saving the day for the family as well as the child in her care. Many nannies acquire CPR training for both elders and infants in their care, to be prepared to intervene in the case of such emergencies, and they do. During the pandemic these workers were in many cases let go from their positions due to families' fears about Covid transmission. Alternately, many were invited to "bubble" with the

families they were working for--to abandon their own residences/personal lives to do so--in order to allay their employers' fears about contracting Covid. Still others simply continued their high risk work, to survive economically, acquiring PPE wherever they could, in many cases making it themselves, and putting their own lives at risk to continue to take care of the children and elders in their charge. Many domestic workers contracted Covid, because of the need--their own, or their employers'--to continue to perform this essential care. Many domestic workers died. Others barely survived ordeals of hospitalization and intubation. Those who survived who had permanent residence or citizenship, received federal relief. Many others, undocumented, were saddled with enormous debt, as unaffordable rental payments, medical bills, and other costs of living piled up, with no health insurance, unemployment benefits, stimulus payments, or other safety nets in sight. The first round of the Excluded Workers Fund payments in 2021 provided a small fraction of these workers with the relief they had so long needed and deserved. However, too many workers remain excluded all across the state, hundreds of thousands of workers.

As a nonprofit worker, a descendant of Irish immigrants and domestic workers, and ally to domestic workers and all workers whose labor saved lives during the pandemic, I am here to express my personal and professional solidarity with every point of the #ExcludedNoMore bill being proffered by the FEW Coalition. The pandemic has shown us the value of every form of work in a time of great collective crisis, and never again should immigrants whose work lays the foundation of our economy and whose labor saves lives EVER be excluded from any federal safety nets available to all. There is no justification possible for excluding people from the most basic rights as human beings, the right to health care, the right to evade destitution, to retain shelter, to feed their families, on the basis of immigration / documentation status.

People come to the U.S. legally and illegally for a plethora of reasons--as economic, racial, and gender refugees, as ordinary people seeking better lives in a different, a safer place in the world. The UN Charter of Human Rights includes article 15--the right to avoid statelessness, the right to have a nationality, the right to be from and belong to, somewhere, some place. If life is not liveable for others elsewhere in the world, and they choose to come here at risk to their own lives, at risk of being imprisoned if discovered, we need to stop judging them long enough to consider WHY. We need to listen, and we need to begin to understand. Immigration and migration are longstanding patterns of human existence, which rarely obey international law or respect national borders and boundaries 100%. People's lives are driven by forces that forever will supersede such boundaries--such as the need to subsist, the need to feed their children, the need to flee from war and natural disasters, the need to escape violence and oppression.

We the most privileged on the planet need to provide subsistence and care to these people, our neighbors, in this wealthy land, before we judge their character on the basis of what immigration paperwork they do or do not have in hand. I ask you to support and fight for the 3 billion dollars to fund every single remaining excluded worker in New York State for their work and their suffering during the pandemic, and to support permanent safety nets to prevent their future destitution and protect their health, healthcare and safety nets for all, including immigrants, regardless of status. Let us demonstrate to the other United States

our deeper awareness of our common humanity here in New York State, and our higher standards of recognizing the contribution of the undercompensated, difficult, heroic, and essential work of the immigrant poor, regardless of their documentation status, throughout the pandemic, before it, and beyond.