Introduction

Florida has more than 112,000 domestic workers who care for and provide in-home cleaning services to families, children, seniors, and people with disabilities. Despite being indispensable and a vital part of the state’s workforce, domestic workers have long faced discrimination and numerous barriers to economic stability. These include meager wages, unsafe and unstable working conditions, scant benefits, and lack of state and federal protections afforded to other working people.

Domestic workers need and deserve policy intervention to mitigate these historical harms.

1 Three in five domestic workers are immigrants.

Nationwide, most domestic workers are U.S.-born, but in Florida, most (60.1 percent) are born outside the United States. By contrast, just 26.3 percent of other working Floridians are immigrants.

2 Domestic workers are overwhelmingly women.

Statewide, 94 percent of domestic workers are women, while just 47 percent of other working Floridians are. This is nominally higher than the national rate (90 percent are women). Women being overrepresented in domestic service primarily reflects gender norms dating back to the 19th century that stigmatized housework and child care as “women’s work.”

3 Most domestic workers are Latina/o or Black.

More than forty-six percent of Florida’s domestic workers are Latina/o, while these workers comprise only 28 percent of the remaining state workforce. Latina/o Floridians are especially likely to work as nannies and house cleaners. Black Floridians are also overrepresented in domestic work, comprising 24.1 percent of Florida’s domestic workers compared to 15.4 percent of the rest of the state workforce. Black Floridians are most likely to work as direct care aides, who may provide personal or home health care, depending on their qualifications.

4 Domestic workers are not paid a living wage.

The median hourly pay for Florida’s domestic workers is $11.85, 47 percent less than the median wage for the rest of Florida’s workforce ($19.13). Even when education and demographic factors (e.g., age, race, immigration status) are accounted for, this occupational wage gap persists. In Florida, this wage does not equate to a living wage for any full-time worker (whether they are parents, single, or couples without children). Even among two-income households without children, $11.85 falls $2 short of a living hourly wage. Furthermore, those in domestic service often cannot secure consistent, full-time hours despite the desire to (known as involuntary part-time).
Empowering Domestic Workers With a Bill of Rights

Florida policymakers should introduce a state domestic workers bill of rights, as several cities and states have successfully done since 2010. Local bills of rights may be a promising alternative until statewide action is feasible. Inaction will not only continually harm domestic workers; it will, over time, dramatically sabotage the state’s long term care capabilities, particularly for Florida’s outsized older adult population.

The provisions of a domestic workers bill of rights should be informed by Florida’s domestic workers themselves. Based on their input in other states, all domestic workers should have the right to:

- Unions and collective bargaining (i.e., negotiating pay and other workplace conditions as a group)
- Privacy and confidentiality, including immigration status
- Written contracts (e.g., schedule, scope of work, pay, benefits, termination notice)
- A living wage that is above the state minimum wage (e.g., $17.82 for one working adult without children11)
- Overtime pay (i.e., time and half pay for hours over 40 per week)
- Paid leave and breaks in scheduling

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2Economic Policy Institute analysis provided for author in August 2022, based on U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey pooled 2017-2021 data

3Economic Policy Institute analysis provided to FPI

4Banerjee, deCourcy, Moore, and Wolfe, 2022


6Economic Policy Institute analysis provided to FPI


8Economic Policy Institute analysis to FPI


10Banerjee, deCourcy, Moore, and Wolfe, 2022

11See endnote 10