New Mexico speaks out for domestic workers

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Today marks an important day for the future of domestic workers in New Mexico and across the country. With the release of a national study, Home Economics: The Invisible and Unregulated World of Domestic Work the National Domestic Worker Alliance is shedding light on the labor conditions for one of the fastest growing industries in the country: domestic care.

Who are domestic care workers? They are the tens of thousands of mostly women, many of whom are immigrant workers, who care for our country’s most vulnerable: our children, our aging and our individuals with special needs.

Domestic workers are trusted to feed, bathe, administer medications, clean homes and provide companionship to our family members so that Americans workers can get to their jobs and continue supporting their families and our nation’s economy.

Despite their critical contribution, these workers are not protected by the basic fair labor laws that others of us take for granted every day. The Home Economics report surveyed over 2000 house cleaners, nannies and caregivers across the country and found that many are paid below minimum wage, do not receive overtime pay, health benefits or workers compensation. Many endure extended working hours without a break, and many cited physical and verbal abuse that went unreported due to the fear of losing their jobs. If we trust domestic workers with our family members, how can we allow these conditions to persist?

In New Mexico, domestic care represents the second fastest growing industry in our state, with over 6,000 new domestic care worker jobs projected by 2016. To respond to this growing need we must ensure that families, educational institutions, employers and lawmakers work together to prepare and protect this growing workforce.

As New Mexicans we must demand better working conditions and basic labor protections for our domestic workers. This is the best way to guarantee that our aging parents and our growing children are receiving the highest quality of care, which we all agree they deserve.