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## Business

# Governor Patrick signs Domestic Workers Bill of Rights into law

By **Beth Healy** | GLOBE STAFF JULY 02, 2014

Governor Patrick signed into law a Domestic Workers Bill of Rights on Wednesday, making Massachusetts the fourth state in the country to provide protections for nannies and housekeepers that most employees at companies take for granted.

Under the new law, in-home workers will have basic labor protections including more clearly defined working hours and tasks, as well as freedom from sexual harassment, trafficking, and retaliation for complaining about wage violations.

“It’s been a long road for domestic workers,” said Monica Halas of Greater Boston Legal Services, one of the leaders of the coalition to secure rights for domestic workers. “We’ve been really waiting since the 1930s to secure these rights.”

Massachusetts follows New York, California, and Hawaii in enacting such a law. There are about 60,000 domestic workers in the Commonwealth, according to the coalition. Most are women, and many are immigrants and minorities.

Angella Sterling, a nanny who spoke at the signing ceremony Wednesday, spoke of her employer canceling her shift at the last minute without pay, and of having to “make up” for taking Christmas day off by working on a weekend. The coalition’s work on behalf of her and other workers is to raise respect for “the work that makes all other work possible.”

“Nannies play a great role in shaping the future of the children who are entrusted to us, from as early as six weeks old, for 10 or more hours per day,” Sterling said. “They learn to crawl with us telling them that they can do it.”

Lydia Edwards, Massachusetts campaign coordinator for the National Domestic Workers Alliance, said, “This is an amazing moment for all of us.” There’s still enormous work to do, she said, from educating workers and employers to enforcing the new law. “The bill is just the beginning for us,” she said.

The governor, speaking before a boisterous State House ceremony attended by scores of workers, their children, and advocates, said, “This is your bill. And this is what happens when you show up in your house and make a claim on your government.”

The bill was co-sponsored by state Senator Anthony W. Petrucci, a Democrat from East Boston, and state Representative Michael J. Moran, a Democrat from Brighton, and had wide support in the Legislature.

Mayor Martin J. Walsh, who also appeared at the signing ceremony, said, “This law corrects a longstanding injustice.”

*Beth Healy can be reached at [beth.healy@globe.com](mailto:beth.healy@globe.com). Follow her on Twitter [@HealyBeth](https://twitter.com/HealyBeth).*