

November 24, 2020

ATTORNEY GENERAL RAOUL RELEASES WORKER PROTECTION UNIT TASK FORCE REPORT

Report Details Workers' Challenges and Recommendations to Protect Workers' Rights

Chicago — Attorney General Kwame Raoul issued the [Worker Protection Unit Task Force \(Task Force\) report](#). Raoul submitted the report to Governor JB Pritzker and the General Assembly, which highlights the problems facing Illinois workers and the Task Force's recommendations to further protect workers' rights.

The Task Force was created under a law initiated by Attorney General Raoul that went into effect on Jan. 1, 2020. The Task Force, chaired by Raoul, is comprised of state's attorneys, as well as representatives from the Illinois Department of Labor, the Illinois Department of Employment Security, the Illinois Department of Human Rights, the Illinois Workers' Compensation Commission and the Attorney General's office. The goal of the Task Force is to allow agencies to more efficiently share information, facilitate cooperation with community stakeholders, and develop and implement best practices for identifying bad actors and combatting systemic discrimination, wage theft and other unfair and unlawful practices affecting Illinois workers.

"The Worker Protection Unit Task Force has helped define the challenges Illinois workers face daily, which have only been amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic," Raoul said. "Partnerships between government and prosecutors are key to fighting wage theft and other unlawful employment practices that harm employees and law-abiding businesses. We also must connect with community groups and organizations representing workers to create a bridge between vulnerable workers and the government. I am committed to utilizing these partnerships and working with Task Force members to implement these recommendations to improve our ability to secure fair compensation and safe workplaces in Illinois."

Throughout the past year, the Task Force held meetings that featured testimony from union representatives, workers, and workers' advocates about the ongoing challenges affecting Illinois workers. The report outlines the most pressing challenges faced by Illinois workers, such as dangerous working conditions for low-wage workers, wage theft, misclassification, erosion of employee protections and benefits, employers circumventing Illinois' prevailing wage law, harassment, and discrimination toward women and people of color. During 2020, the spread of COVID-19 has become one of the most pressing issues facing workers and has magnified the impact of persistent workplace violations, and front-line workers and representatives of the unions that represent them described the safety hazards workers continue to face. In addition, Task Force members explained the work their respective agencies are doing to protect workers during the pandemic.

The Task Force's report also highlights ongoing efforts to address these challenges and opportunities for government entities to continue to work together. Specifically, the Task Force offered recommendations to effectively collaborate on prevention and enforcement efforts by:

- **Creating subject matter enforcement working groups:** Persistent unlawful practices by employers require the attention of different governmental entities, depending on the subject area. By creating working groups to focus on specific issues, the agencies represented by task force members can work together to set priorities and draw on their respective tools and resources to most effectively take action against bad actors and prevent recurring unlawful practices.
- **Sharing data and information between agencies:** One obstacle to effective enforcement is that key information held by governmental entities often exists in "silos" and is not easily accessible by

other enforcement agencies. Identifying useful information that each respective agency holds and strategizing about how best to analyze and share this information is necessary to improve enforcement actions.

- **Committing to regular communications with stakeholders to share insight and information:** Part of any enforcement effort should include outreach to community and labor organizations that interact with workers. Establishing regular communication and collaboration can result in enforcement opportunities that may be missed by traditional government points-of-contact.

Attorney General Raoul has long fought unlawful employment practices, and has continued to do during the COVID-19 pandemic. Raoul has devoted resources to educate and obtain compliance from employers in protecting their workforces through adequate health and safety measures during the pandemic. Raoul also joined and led multistate efforts urging Amazon, Whole Foods and Walmart, to strengthen measures to protect the health and safety of their workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In August, Raoul filed a lawsuit against Voyant, a beauty packaging company in Cook County, and installed a monitor following complaints of sexual harassment and retaliation from workers. Raoul has also initiated a civil action against companies unlawfully conspiring to fix workers' wages and restrict their right to find better employment opportunities. Additionally, Raoul joined coalitions of attorneys general calling on the federal government to stop the implementation of a proposed rule that would strip workers of key protections provided under the Fair Labor Standards Act and the implementation of the U.S. Department of Labor's Joint Employer Rule, which would undermine important labor protections for workers.

The law creating the Task Force also codified a unit within the Attorney General's office that has clear legal authority to enforce violations of worker protection laws. Attorney General Raoul encourages workers who believe their rights have been violated to contact his Workplace Rights Bureau by calling 1-844-740-5076 or by visiting the [Attorney General's website](#).

Please see attached for statements from Task Force members.