

July 12, 2016

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
United States House of Representatives
Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: The Wage Theft Prevention and Wage Recovery Act

Dear Senator Murray and Congresswoman DeLauro:

The undersigned organizations write in enthusiastic support for The Wage Theft Prevention and Wage Recovery Act (S. 2697/H.R. 4376), which you introduced on March 16, 2016. As you know, wage theft is an epidemic that costs mostly low-wage workers tens of billions of dollars each year in unpaid wages. The legal tools they have at their disposal, be it thinly-resourced departments of labor or private lawsuits, are not available to far too many workers seeking to be properly paid for all of their work. The Wage Theft Prevention and Wage Recovery Act is an important and truly comprehensive weapon in the fight against wage theft.

This legislation, if enacted, would for the first time, impose a federal mandate that workers be paid the wages they were promised, not just the federal minimum wage. The bill would also impose a uniform federal standard for what must be disclosed on a pay stub, giving workers the information they need to be sure that they are being paid properly. The Act would increase the remedies available to workers from double to triple damages, and would increase the penalties that could be imposed on employers who violate the Fair Labor Standards Act. Employees would also enjoy far greater protections against the all-too-frequent retaliation they suffer when they report wage and hour violations, finally making employers pay a sufficiently steep penalty for their acts of intimidation made in furtherance of wage theft.

The statute of limitations would be expanded from two to four years (and from three to five for willful violations), which is a key provision because the current statute of limitations is so short that it often means that even when an employer is found liable for unpaid wages, they still come out ahead because of the long duration of their illegal wage practices. And the bill would harmonize the procedures for wage and hour class actions with all other class action lawsuits, by making them "opt out" lawsuits, instead of the current "opt-in" lawsuits, which make it easier for employers to escape full liability for the scope of their actions.

There are many other important provisions in the Wage Theft Prevention and Wage Recovery Act, including the right to be given one's last paycheck in a timely fashion, but they are too numerous to mention in this letter. Suffice it to say, this bill is a comprehensive and common-sense piece of legislation that is long over-due. It will help employees know their rights to be properly paid, will give them the tools to ensure that they are being compensated as they should be, and impose appropriate disincentives to steal wages from one's workers.

Thank you both for your leadership on this important issue. We stand ready to work with you to enact The Wage Theft Prevention and Wage Recovery Act.

Sincerely,

9to5 California
9to5 Colorado
9to5 Georgia
9to5 Wisconsin
9to5, National Association of Working Women
AFL-CIO
Agenda Project Action Fund
All Hands Solutions LLC
American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees
Americans for Democratic Action (ADA)
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - LA
Ayuda
Bend the Arc Jewish Action
California Institute for Rural Studies
California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation
Center on Policy Initiatives
Centro de los Derechos del Migrante, Inc. (CDM)
Centro Legal de la Raza
Cincinnati Interfaith Workers Center
Coalition on Human Needs
Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking (CAST)
Colorado Center on Law and Policy
Columbia Legal Services
Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto
Community Legal Services, Philadelphia

Connecticut Voices for Children
Daily Kos
DC Employment Justice Center
DC Fiscal Policy Institute
Demos
Employee Rights Center
Equal Justice Center
Equal Rights Advocates
Fair World Project
Farmworker Association of Florida
Fiscal Policy Institute
Food Chain Workers Alliance
Freedom Network USA
Fuerza del Valle Workers' Center
Global Workers Justice Alliance
Hawaii Appleseed Center for Law & Economic Justice
Indiana Community Action Association
Indiana Institute for Working Families
Institute for Science and Human Values
Interfaith Worker Justice
International Brotherhood of Teamsters
Jobs With Justice
Justice at Work
Kentucky Equal Justice Center
Keystone Research Center
KIWA (Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance)
La Raza Centro Legal
Labor & Employment Committee of National Lawyers Guild
Laundry Workers Center
Legal Aid Justice Center
Legal Aid Society- Employment Law Center
Michigan League for Public Policy
NAACP
National Center for Law and Economic Justice
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of La Raza
National Employment Lawyers Association
National Guestworker Alliance
National Employment Law Project
National Immigration Law Center
National Women's Law Center

National Workrights Institute
New Mexico Voices for Children
New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice
North Carolina Justice Center
Northwest Workers' Justice Project
Oklahoma Policy Institute
Oregon Center for Public Policy
PICO National Network
Pioneer Valley Workers Center
Policy Matters Ohio
PolicyLink
Progressive Democrats of America
Public Justice Center
Raise Up for \$15
RESULTS
Rhode Island Center for Justice
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Service Employees International Union
South Florida AFL-CIO
Street Level Health Project
Sugar Law Center for Economic & Social Justice
The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis
The Economic Progress Institute (Rhode Island)
The Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States
The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
The Legal Aid Society
Transnational Worker Rights Clinic - University of Texas Law School
United Auto Workers (UAW)
United Church of Christ, Justice & Witness Ministries
United Taxi Workers of San Diego
Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy
Warehouse Worker Resource Center
Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs
Washington Metro Disabled Students Collective
Workplace Justice Project, Loyola College of Law