



Seattle City Council

May 18, 2015

The Honorable Curren D. Price, Jr.
Chair, Economic Development Committee

The Honorable Paul Krekorian
Chair, Budget and Finance Committee

c/o Office of the City Clerk
200 N. Spring St., Room 395
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Council File 14-1371-S1, Citywide Minimum Wage Ordinance /Include Language Addressing and Funding Community Partnerships to Address Wage Theft

Dear Chairman Price and Chairman Krekorian,

The Seattle City Council funded community-based partnerships as a key component of enforcement of our \$15 minimum wage law. Such partnerships are essential to the success of not just the minimum wage law, but our sick leave, jobs assistance, and wage theft ordinances as well. As Seattle Council members, we are writing to urge you to include funding for community-based enforcement as you consider a minimum wage policy and your city budget in Los Angeles.

In last year's City of Seattle budget, we funded community organizations to do outreach and education to low wage workers and to help workers access our enforcement processes. We believe that formalized partnerships with community organizations are important for a number of reasons:

1. Many low-wage workers are unaware of the specifics of our labor laws. Community organizations have the reach to ensure that as many workers as possible are trained in their rights. This is especially true for workers for whom English is not the first language.
2. Workers fear retaliation from their employers if they come forward with a wage theft complaint. Workers may be more willing to engage in the process with the support of a community organization behind them.
3. Even workers that may be willing to complain often do not know how to access government agencies, or which enforcement agency to go to (the city, the state, OSHA, the EEOC, etc.). Community partners can be a single entry-point for workers needing to enforce their rights at any level of government.
4. The City of Seattle Office of Labor Standards wants to pro-actively enforce wage and hour laws in specific industries with high levels of violations. Community organizations can be valuable partners in understanding the types of violations that happen in industries like residential construction and food service because of their connection to workers in those industries.

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Our City's new Office of Labor Standards is currently developing an RFP for community outreach. We believe that the success of enforcement of our labor laws depends on a robust level of funding for community partners and ongoing cooperation between the city and community organizations. We thank you for taking the time to consider our input and hope that Los Angeles will consider a similar approach. Please feel free to contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,



Councilmember Nick Licata



Councilmember Mike O'Brien