

March 1, 2022

Senator Eric Pratt
Chair, Senate Jobs and Economic Growth Finance and Policy
3219 Minnesota Senate Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Chair Pratt and Senate Jobs committee members:

We are writing on behalf of the Coalition to End Wage Theft to respectfully oppose Senate File 919 and as amended by the A2 amendment. Members of the coalition met with you last year about our concerns with this bill and we do not see those concerns addressed in the A2.

In Minnesota, we believe that people should be paid for all of the hours they work. Unfortunately, we know all too well this isn't always the case. The 2019 Wage Theft Prevention Act was enacted to address the longstanding, widespread, and well-documented problem of wage theft in Minnesota and ensure working people are paid what they are owed. Key components of the law are to ensure that workers know what they are supposed to be paid, and that penalties are strong enough to deter employers from violating the law.

If the provisions in the bill as amended were to become law, employers would not have to provide wage information up to seven days after the employee has started work, so workers would not know what they are supposed to be paid until they have already worked. Similarly, employers would no longer have to notify the worker of a change in their rate of pay in advance of the change, so workers would not know what they are supposed to be paid until after the fact. In addition, staffing agencies would not have to notify employees of changes to pay information after the initial job placement, so employees of staffing agencies will not know what they are supposed to be paid at subsequent placements.

The bill also eliminates penalties for a first violation of the written notice requirements, no matter how many violations are found. This allows employers to ignore the written notice requirement, since they are unlikely to be caught, and if they are, there will be no penalty, even for willful violations affecting multiple employees.

Finally, the bill limits penalties on the worst actors, employers who fail to pay more than 10 days after service of a demand from DLI on behalf of the employee. It caps the penalties DLI can charge at 20 days' worth of wages. This would allow the worst actors refusing to pay

their employees even a month after service of the demand tKEviono simply factor in limited penalties as part of their cost of doing business.

We know many of the workers deemed “essential” during this pandemic, the people who have kept our state running, are also in industries that too often have bad actors. Weakening laws meant to protect working people is a bad idea at any time, but especially during a pandemic when so many families have been hanging on by a thread.

We respectfully ask committee members to vote no on this bill as amended.

Sincerely,

The Advocates for Human Rights
AFSCME Council 65
Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en Lucha (CTUL)
Education Minnesota
Minnesota AFL-CIO
Minnesota Nurses Association
Restaurant Opportunities Center of Minnesota (ROC-MN)
SEIU State Council
UNITE HERE Local 17

