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CHICAGO WORKERS RECEIVED OVER \$1 MILLION IN RESTITUTION IN 2021

Office of Labor Standards report highlights worker protection progress

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot and the Chicago Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) today announced a historic milestone in the fight for worker protections. In 2021, the BACP Office of Labor Standards (OLS) secured over \$1,000,000 in restitution for Chicago’s workers. The restitution resulted from minimum wage and paid sick leave employer violations, most notably against [Mondelez International and Tri City Foods](#). The courageous employees exercised their legal rights under Chicago’s labor laws. The recently released [Office of Labor Standards \(OLS\) 2021 Annual Report](#) highlights enforcement, complaint intake and engagement with workers and businesses. In 2021, over 2,800 workers received restitution after OLS investigations uncovered Chicago labor law violations. This report summarizes key performance measures for OLS in 2021 and will be complimented by a comprehensive annual report in mid-2022.

"Chicago has and will always be a city made by workers and for workers, which is why we will never stop fighting to make sure they have the world-class protections they deserve," said Mayor Lightfoot. "Our city's landmark labor protections provide a voice for the most vulnerable workers and provide minimum working standards for all. I'm pleased that the City was able to secure our hard-earned wages in restitution and I commend the Office of Labor Standards for continuing to be a champion for workers."

"Our goal is to promote and achieve compliance with labor standards to ensure the welfare of Chicago's workforce," said BACP Commissioner Kenneth J. Meyer. "We do not hesitate to hold employers accountable when they break Chicago's labor laws. We encourage employees and employers to contact BACP for assistance in understanding their rights and responsibilities under Chicago's labor laws."

All Chicago worker protections are enforced by the BACP Office of Labor Standards (OLS). The OLS is dedicated to promoting and enforcing Chicago's labor laws, including Minimum Wage, Paid Sick Leave, Fair Workweek, Wage Theft Ordinance and the recently passed Domestic Worker contract requirement. To learn about Chicago's labor laws, visit Chicago.gov/LaborStandards. OLS reminds workers that if left unreported, workers could lose hundreds of dollars due to unpaid minimum wage, wage theft and paid sick leave.

"The backpay the OLS was able to recover in 2021 represents lost wages and benefits to the most vulnerable workers and provided much needed relief for these front-line workers," said Andrew Fox, Director of the BACP Office of Labor Standards. "OLS works

tirelessly to ensure workers receive their hard-earned wages, are awarded paid sick leave and are provided predictable work schedules in certain industries. Our work holds employers accountable, and keeps employees protected.”

In 2021, the Mayor’s Protecting Workers Working Group (PWWG), co-chaired by the Mayor’s Office and OLS, collaborated to shape worker protections within the [Chi Biz Strong ordinances](#), which included Chicago’s first-ever wage theft protections for all workers and raised the minimum wage of all domestic workers to \$15/hour as of August 1, 2021. The PWWG initiatives align with the Mayor’s anti-poverty agenda, which includes growing quality jobs, improving people’s income, building wealth and closing racial health disparities. In addition, as of January 1, 2022, Chicago employers of domestic workers must provide their workers with a written contract in their primary language, as requested by the worker, regardless of their status as an employee or independent contractor. A domestic worker includes any person whose primary duties include housekeeping, nanny services, caregiving, personal care, or home health services. Find information, resources, and guidelines on creating safe workplaces at [Chi.gov/Care](#).

“I am thankful to our community, City and partners that have enabled progress towards a workplace environment for all workers to be supported and protected,” said Susan Sadlowski Garza, 10th Ward Alderwoman and Chairwoman of the Committee on Workforce Development. “Chicago workers should be assured that we are advocates for worker protections and take allegations seriously.”

In 2021, Arise Chicago was awarded a grant from OLS as well as the Chicago Foundation for Women to conduct outreach and education on Chicago’s labor laws to vulnerable workers with a priority focus on domestic workers. This work reached over 165,000 workers through awareness campaigns, trainings, workshops and direct contact. The efforts resulted in over \$1,000,000 in increased workers’ wages. Arise Chicago, founded in 1991, is dedicated to building partnerships between faith communities and workers to fight workplace injustice through education, organizing and advocating for public policy changes. Arise Chicago has been working in partnership with the City to create awareness and resources for vulnerable workers in underserved communities and assists workers in bringing complaints to the OLS.

“Arise Chicago mobilized our members to win creation of the Office of Labor Standards. Today’s announcement of \$1 million recovered for Chicago workers in 2021 shows exactly why this office is needed. The OLS plays a critical role in improving pay and conditions across the city--especially for low-paid workers who are disproportionately women, immigrants, and workers of color. Arise Chicago is proud to serve on the Protecting Workers Working group to advance policies that benefit local communities through improved working conditions,” said Laura Garza, Arise Chicago Worker Center Program Director.

“As a domestic worker myself, and one who is a trained Contract Specialist with Arise, I am so glad we have the Office of Labor Standards in Chicago to listen to and respond to workers. We are grateful to the OLS and Mayor Lightfoot for supporting workers like myself. It is so important to know that the city recovered these wages. It will help me and other Arise Contract Specialists let domestic workers and all workers know that the City

has their back and will respond to our needs,” said Sofia Magdalena Portillo, home cleaner and Arise Chicago Contract Specialist.

To file a labor standards complaint, workers can use the CHI 311 system (call 3-1-1, use the CHI311 mobile app, or visit 311.chicago.gov) or complete a [Complaint Form](#).

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