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Los Angeles City Council Ad Hoc Games Committee

LA28 Human Rights Report

Labor Rights, Worker Protections, and Low Wage Industries Policy Brief

Submitted by the Los Angeles Worker Center Network

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The Los Angeles Worker Center Network (LAWCN) respectfully submits this policy brief regarding the Labor Rights section of the LA28 Human Rights Report. LAWCN is a countywide coalition of worker centers and labor justice organizations representing low wage, immigrant, Black, Latino, Asian Pacific Islander, and historically marginalized workers throughout Los Angeles County. Our member organizations work directly with workers in industries most vulnerable to wage theft, retaliation, labor trafficking indicators, unsafe working conditions, payroll fraud, and subcontracting abuse.

LAWCN appreciates that the Labor Rights section of the report identifies many of the legal protections that already exist under federal, state, county, and city law, including minimum wage protections, overtime requirements, workplace safety standards, anti-discrimination laws, and protections against retaliation and harassment. The report also acknowledges that labor issues may arise across construction, hospitality, logistics, procurement, staffing, temporary event infrastructure, and supply chains connected to the Games. These are important acknowledgements.

However, the report largely describes existing laws and existing enforcement structures without sufficiently explaining how vulnerable workers will realistically access those protections during the scale and complexity of the Olympic Games. The key issue is not whether labor protections exist on

paper. The key issue is whether low wage workers, particularly immigrant, subcontracted, temporary, and nonunion workers, can safely access those protections before exploitation pushes them deeper into economic instability, housing insecurity, or homelessness.

The LA28 Games will place enormous pressure on industries that already experience high rates of labor violations. Research on California's fast food sector alone found that 85% of workers surveyed experienced at least one form of wage theft. Studies of the hospitality and garment industries document similar or higher rates of violations. These include hospitality, restaurants, janitorial services, transportation, warehousing, event staffing, garment production, private security, carwash services, temporary staffing agencies, and subcontracted construction. Many workers in these sectors do not report violations through government hotlines or online portals because they fear retaliation, immigration consequences, blacklisting, language barriers, or simply do not trust government systems. Complaint driven enforcement models alone will not be sufficient.

LAWCN strongly urges the City of Los Angeles to strengthen the Office of Wage Standards before the Games begin. Ideally through a dedicated investment in 2025-2026 that allows sufficient time to hire staff, build systems, and establish partnership before Olympic-scale pressure arrives. The City should expand enforcement staffing, increase proactive investigations in high risk industries, improve multilingual outreach, restore worker education funding, establish stronger co-enforcement partnerships with trusted community organizations, and create rapid response systems for urgent labor violations involving retaliation, wage theft, unsafe working conditions, or vulnerable workers. The City should also strengthen data sharing and coordination between the Office of Wage Standards, the Bureau of Contract Administration, the California Labor Commissioner, Cal OSHA, and Los Angeles County's Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA).

LAWCN is already actively engaged in labor standards reform and worker protection efforts throughout Los Angeles County and the City of Los Angeles. Our network has participated extensively in ongoing Office of Wage Standards reform discussions focused on strategic enforcement, prioritization of low wage worker claims, proactive investigations, and expanded co enforcement partnerships with community organizations. LAWCN has also engaged directly with

Los Angeles County DCBA regarding countywide labor standards enforcement, wage theft prevention strategies, outreach systems, and worker protection infrastructure that extend beyond city boundaries.

This regional approach matters because the labor footprint of the Olympics will not stop at the borders of the City of Los Angeles. Workers supporting the Games will move across Los Angeles County through hotels, transportation systems, warehouses, food service operations, construction projects, and temporary event infrastructure. A city only enforcement strategy will leave significant gaps. LAWCN therefore strongly recommends the creation of a standing City County State labor enforcement table that includes OWS, BCA, DCBA, state labor agencies, worker centers, legal service providers, labor unions, and community organizations to coordinate outreach, referrals, investigations, education, and rapid response systems before and during the Games.

LAWCN also believes the city should prioritize industries and labor structures that are historically associated with elevated risks of exploitation. Particular attention should be paid to subcontracting chains and temporary staffing systems where accountability often becomes obscured between prime contractors, subcontractors, labor brokers, and staffing agencies. Contract language alone is not enough. The City should establish enforceable audit standards, transparent reporting requirements, worker centered complaint systems, and meaningful penalties for contractors or subcontractors that violate labor standards connected to Olympic operations. This includes worker center complaint systems that do not require workers to navigate government portals alone, and meaningful financial penalties for contractors or subcontractors that violate labor standards, i.e. penalties sufficient to function as a deterrent, not merely a cost of doing business.

Additionally, LAWCN urges the Committee to recognize the growing connection between labor exploitation and homelessness in Los Angeles County. LAWCN actively participated in the Task Force on Latinx People Experiencing Homelessness Report commissioned by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the motion “Immediate Action for the Growing Number of Latinx People Experiencing Homelessness.” The report identified wage theft and labor exploitation as major structural drivers of housing instability and homelessness among Latino workers and

families in Los Angeles County. The report concluded that workers experiencing stolen wages often struggle to pay rent, maintain housing stability, or recover from economic emergencies, particularly in low wage industries heavily represented throughout the Olympic labor ecosystem.

The findings of that Task Force are directly relevant to the LA28 Human Rights Report. Wage theft is not simply a labor issue. It is also a housing stability issue, a public health issue, an immigrant justice issue, and an economic equity issue. Without strong proactive enforcement systems, the economic pressures created by the Games risk deepening existing patterns of instability among low wage communities already struggling to survive in Los Angeles County.

LAWCN respectfully recommends the following actions:

1. Expand and strengthen the Office of Wage Standards prior to 2028.
2. Develop proactive enforcement systems focused on high violation industries.
3. Establish formal co enforcement partnerships with community organizations and worker centers.
4. Coordinate labor enforcement across City, County, and State agencies.
5. Require enforceable contractor accountability standards and transparent auditing systems.
6. Fund multilingual worker outreach, education, intake, and legal referral systems.
7. Prioritize protections for low wage, immigrant, subcontracted, temporary, and nonunion workers.
8. Publicly report labor enforcement outcomes connected to Games related industries.
9. Integrate labor protections into broader homelessness prevention and economic stability strategies.

The Labor Rights section of the LA28 Human Rights Report identifies important values and principles. The challenge now is implementation. The city must ensure that the workers most vulnerable to exploitation can realistically access labor protections when it matters most. That requires enforcement infrastructure, trusted community partnerships, regional coordination, and sustained investment well before the Olympic Games begin.

Sincerely,

Armando Gudino

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