

January 23, 2020

ATTORNEY GENERAL RAOUL CONVENES FIRST MEETING OF WORKER PROTECTION TASK FORCE
Task Force Will Facilitate Collaboration Between State Agencies and Prosecutors

Chicago — Attorney General Kwame Raoul today convened the first meeting of a task force that will facilitate collaboration between the Attorney General's office, county prosecutors and state agencies in order to better protect workers' rights and law-abiding businesses in Illinois.

The Worker Protection Unit Task Force was created under Senate Bill (SB) 161, which was initiated by Attorney General Raoul and signed into law by Gov. JB Pritzker. The new law became effective on Jan. 1, 2020. The task force will bring together the state's leading regulatory agencies that impact workers, law enforcement and worker protection advocates in order to better combat wage payment violations and unfair labor practices.

"Partnerships between government and prosecutors will help us better fight wage theft and other unlawful employment practices that harm employees and law-abiding businesses," Raoul said. "I have spent years advocating for policies that protect Illinois' workforce, perhaps our state's most valuable asset, and the Worker Protection Unit Task Force will improve our ability to protect the men and women who deserve fair compensation and safe workplaces."

Attorney General Raoul partnered with labor leaders and state regulatory agencies to draft and advocate for passage of SB 161 during the 2019 spring legislative session. The new law established a Worker Protection Unit Task Force to facilitate information sharing and collaboration between the Attorney General's office, local prosecutors, the Illinois Department of Labor, the Illinois Department of Human Rights, the Illinois Department of Employment Security and the Workers' Compensation Commission.

The inaugural meeting of the Worker Protection Task Force included presentations by labor organizations and worker protection advocates covering key issues facing employees and law abiding employers throughout the state, such as wage theft, employee misclassification, prevailing wage, and the impact discrimination and wage theft can have on work environments. The task force also heard from employees who have experienced wage theft and discrimination in the workplace based on race and gender. Additional meetings will take place throughout the year.

In addition to establishing the Worker Protection Unit Task Force, Senate Bill 161 codified the Worker Protection Unit within the Attorney General's office to enforce violations of worker protection laws. The law also gives the Attorney General clear legal authority to investigate and bring enforcement actions against employers that commit wage theft and other workplace rights violations.

Attorney General Raoul has long fought against unlawful employment practices, such as paying workers less than the legal minimum wage, taking illegal deductions from workers' paychecks and misclassifying employees to avoid wage and labor laws that protect workers. In 2019, Raoul led a coalition of attorneys general in opposing a U.S. Department of Labor proposal to allow employers to expand its fluctuating workweek rule, the only rule under which workers' hourly and overtime rates of pay actually decrease as the hours they work per week increase.

Also in 2019, Raoul also testified before the Congressional House Appropriations Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Subcommittee about the wage theft crisis and the importance of the federal government partnering with states to combat wage theft. Additionally, Raoul and a coalition of attorneys

general secured a settlement this spring with four fast-food chains to stop using no-poach agreements, restrictive agreements that prevent employees from leaving one fast food franchise in pursuit of a better paying job at another franchise in the same chain.

Attorney General Raoul encourages workers who believe their rights have been violated to contact his Worker Protection Unit by calling 1-844-740-5076 or by visiting the [Attorney General's website](#).