

October 14, 2021

**ATTORNEY GENERAL RAOUL ANNOUNCES CONSENT DECREES TO END RACIAL DISCRIMINATION
IN HIRING AT MEAT PROCESSING FACILITY**

***Decrees Resolve Allegations Meat Processing Company and its Temporary Staffing Agency
Discriminated Against Black Job Applicants***

Chicago — Attorney General Kwame Raoul today announced consent decrees with two Illinois companies resolving a lawsuit alleging the companies conspired to discriminate against job applicants based on race. According to Raoul, Mistica Foods (Mistica) and Specialized Staffing (Specialized) engaged in a brazen pattern of discrimination against Black workers and job applicants who sought employment at Mistica through Specialized.

Mistica, a meat processing company with facilities in Addison and Lyons, Illinois, hires workers indirectly through temporary staffing agencies, including Specialized, an Illinois-based temporary staffing agency. The alleged discriminatory conduct resulted in hundreds of Black workers and job applicants being denied gainful employment at Mistica.

“Using temporary staffing agencies to engage in race-based discrimination unfairly keeps entire communities out of the labor market and denies them the opportunity earn a fair wage,” Raoul said. “I am committed to taking action to stop pervasive discrimination wherever we find it, because Illinois workers should have equal opportunities for employment regardless of race, sex, or other protected grounds – particularly at a time when many residents are unemployed or underemployed as a result of the pandemic.”

[In the lawsuit](#), filed in the Cook County Circuit Court, Raoul alleged that over the course of at least four years, Mistica has instructed its temporary staffing agencies not to assign Black workers to Mistica and that Specialized Staffing, which supplied the majority of Mistica’s workforce, has complied with these discriminatory requests. Raoul’s lawsuit alleges that despite having a growing need for workers at its facilities, Mistica supervisors made negative comments about the work ethic of Black individuals and expressed to Specialized that the company’s preference was not to hire Black individuals. The lawsuit also alleges that when Specialized assigned Black workers to Mistica, the company dismissed them without giving a reason.

Mistica’s pervasive policy of discrimination, perpetrated through its staffing agencies, resulted in a severe under-representation of Black employees at Mistica’s facilities compared to their prevalence in the relevant job market. The number of Black employees assigned to Mistica each year by Specialized Staffing dropped consistently between 2017 and 2020.

The consent decrees will require [both Mistica and Specialized](#) to take steps to increase the number of Black employees assigned to Mistica. For example, Mistica and Specialized must participate in career fairs at predominantly Black communities and advertise job openings on radio stations with predominantly Black listeners. Mistica and Specialized are also required to follow model record-keeping practices designed to track the race of workers assigned to Mistica, as well as the applicants that Specialized considers for assignment to Mistica. These requirements will help prevent future discrimination. In addition, Mistica has agreed to do business only with staffing agencies that follow those record-keeping practices. Mistica and Specialized are also obligated to follow strict reporting requirements for the duration of the consent decrees that will allow Raoul’s office to monitor the companies’ compliance. In addition, employees and supervisors

at both companies will be required to undergo bias trainings. Finally, Specialized will pay \$180,000, and Mistica pay \$270,000 in civil penalties.

The settlements build on Attorney General Raoul's efforts to advocate for workers and protect them from unlawful discrimination. In April, Raoul filed four lawsuits and consent decrees against one temporary staffing agency and three client companies to end sex-based discrimination. Raoul alleged the companies segregated their workplaces by making some positions open only to men and others only to women, regardless of whether workers could perform the duties of each position. Raoul also previously sued Voyant, a beauty packaging company in Cook County that relied on temporary staffing agencies to source its workforce, following complaints by temporary laborers of sexual harassment and retaliation. Raoul installed a court appointed monitor to prevent future sexual harassment at this company.

Raoul's lawsuit follows a report issued in February by Partners for Dignity and Rights and the Equal Rights Center, which conducted random testing of 60 Chicago-area staffing agencies and found that two-thirds of agencies engaged in racial discrimination. The report entitled "[Opening the Door.](#)" details the pervasiveness of hiring and assignment discrimination based on race by temporary staffing agencies.

Attorney General Raoul encourages workers who have experienced discrimination by Mistica, Specialized, or other temporary staffing agencies to contact his office's Workplace Rights Hotline at 1-844-740-5076 or by visiting the [Attorney General's website.](#)

Bureau Chief Alvar Ayala, Counsel to the Attorney General Kimberly Janas and Assistant Attorney General Samantha Kronk handled the case for Raoul's Worker Protection Bureau.