

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 1, 2025

The Honorable Lori Chavez-DeRemer  
Secretary  
United States Department of Labor  
500 C St NW STE 600  
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Secretary Chavez-DeRemer,

As co-chairs of the Congressional Child Labor Prevention Task Force, we urge you to uphold and build upon existing protections to prevent child labor in the United States and abroad. Child labor remains a critical issue in our country. We respectfully request that your agency work closely with Congress to ensure the safety and security of our supply chains, places of work, and, most importantly, our children.

According to the Wage and Hour Division (WHD) within the Department of Labor (DOL), child labor violations have increased in recent years. The number of children employed in violation of federal child labor laws increased 31 percent<sup>1</sup> between 2019 and 2024. In Fiscal Year 2024 alone, DOL investigated 736 cases of child labor violations.<sup>2</sup> The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) prohibits the employment of oppressive child labor in the United States, including the shipment of “hot goods,” or products that are made in connection to oppressive child labor. It is incumbent upon Congress and DOL to work together to combat the rise in child labor violations in every corner of the country and ensure companies are not allowing children to fill the gaps within our workforce.

In recent years, states have increasingly rolled back their child labor protections.<sup>3</sup> Just last week, the state legislature in Florida advanced a bill that would allow children as young as 14 to work overnight shifts - even during the school week.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, a new law in Indiana took effect this year that would allow 16 and 17-year-olds to work hazardous jobs in agriculture, along with other loosened restrictions.<sup>5</sup> This kind of legislation erodes protections for kids, making it more difficult to ensure their success in school and increasing the likelihood that they will work in dangerous jobs that are meant for adults.

These developments are deeply concerning to us, especially as recent cuts to staff and programs<sup>6</sup> at DOL may inhibit your agency’s ability to hold violators of child labor laws accountable. Specifically, we are alarmed by the defunding of child labor and labor rights programming at DOL’s International Labor Affairs Bureau, which works to enforce labor standards in more than 40 countries.<sup>7</sup> We would also like to underscore that the Wage

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1 <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/child-labor/enforcement-keeping-young-workers-safe>

2 [US Department of Labor investigation uncovers child labor violations at 2 Knoxville Marco’s Pizza locations; employer pays \\$207K in penalties](#)

3 <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/06/12/child-labor-is-on-the-rise>

4 <https://www.cnn.com/2025/03/25/business/florida-child-labor-laws/index.html>

5 <https://www.indystar.com/story/news/investigations/2025/02/19/as-lawmaker-relaxed-regulations-child-labor-violations-spiked-in-indiana-as-regulations-were-relaxed/77512769007/>

6 <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/mar/27/trump-cuts-child-labor-human-trafficking-programs>

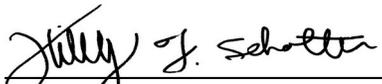
7 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2025/03/27/trump-labor-department-international-child-labor/>

and Hour Division within DOL, which is responsible for enforcing child labor protections within our nation's borders, only had 650 investigators as of October 2024 - the lowest number since 2007.<sup>8</sup> Vulnerable children cannot afford to lose any more of these advocates, who are often the only people able to intervene on their behalf.

We urge you to adhere to and enforce the child labor protections laid out in the FLSA and ensure that any changes made within DOL do not put our nation's children at risk. We respectfully request a meeting with you or the appropriate representative within DOL to discuss these concerns and find ways to collaborate to protect children from all forms of exploitation. The integrity of our supply chains and our places of work are essential to a strong economy that works for all Americans, and the safety of children should remain paramount in our pursuit of that goal.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Hillary J. Scholten  
Member of Congress

  
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Morgan McGarvey  
Member of Congress

<sup>8</sup> <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/employment/trumps-federal-workforce-cuts-hit-labor-department-enforcement>