



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

**Department of Labor and
Workforce Development**

Labor Standards and Safety Division
Office of the Director

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March 31, 2025

The Honorable Scott Kawasaki
Chair, Senate State Affairs
Alaska State Capitol, Room 105
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Chair Kawasaki,

Thank you for inviting the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) to present Senate Bill 68, Employment of Minors, to the Senate State Affairs committee on March 25, 2025. This letter completes the responses to questions and requests for additional information from the hearing.

1. What research has DOL done on the negative impacts of youth working a 40-hour work week?

Existing research examining the effects of weekly work hours on youth is confined to the school year. The US Department of Labor limits the weekly work hours for 14 and 15-year-olds during the school year but allows a 40-hour workweek during school breaks. Notably, no other state restricts these young workers from a 40-hour week when school is not in session. Alaska's law is unique in this regard.

2. Provide further analysis of workplace violations with child labor and others. Are citations being issued? Have businesses shut down for violations?

In FY2025, 254 child labor issues were addressed, primarily concerning work permits. Other violations included minors using age-prohibited tools, working in prohibited occupations, and being employed outside permitted hours. Potential violations are reported to Wage and Hour via site visits, calls from parents, minors, educators, other businesses, state and local agencies, concerned citizens, or the employers themselves.

Wage and Hour addresses Title 23 and child labor violations through a process of conference and persuasion under 8 AAC 15.190, with the goal of correcting any identified issues. This process involves counseling employers on labor laws and outlining necessary steps for compliance. We find that when employers are made aware of child labor violations, they quickly take corrective action to bring themselves into compliance.

If an employer refuses to comply, Wage and Hour does not have the authority to independently issue citations, fines, or "stop work" orders to close a business for violations of Alaska labor law. With very few exceptions outlined in Title 36 public construction

laws, subsequent enforcement actions or penalties must be pursued through court proceedings, either in civil court for non-payment of wages or through a misdemeanor conviction in criminal court, which is often prohibitively expensive. Although Wage and Hour has occasionally initiated civil court action to enforce wage payments resulting from wage claim investigations, this remains a complex and costly process.

3. Provide a list of all requests to the legislature for additional investigators in the last six years?

In the FY2021 budget, one position was eliminated in Wage and Hour. In FY2023, an Investigator position was added bringing staff levels back to FY2021 numbers. Due to the DOLWD budget and priorities, additional investigative positions have not been requested in the yearly budget cycle but have been requested in legislation affecting the agency.

The department is required by AS 23.332(a) to process work permits, granting minors the necessary approval to work. Additionally, AS 23.10.075 mandates the administration of the Wage and Hour Act, which ensures payment of minimum wage and overtime rates. Wage and Hour has authority under AS 23.15.220 to investigate wage claims, while AS 36.05.030 obligates the department to determine prevailing wage rates and investigate any violations thereof on public construction projects. These responsibilities prioritize our resource allocation.

The department recognizes that compliance inspections are the most effective means of proactively identifying violations and ensuring compliance with child labor laws. Removing the requirement to process individual work permits would free up staff resources for more effective purposes. This shift would allow us to concentrate on providing compliance assistance and identifying and rectifying violations proactively, regardless of whether a complaint has been filed, or an incident has been reported. This change would improve our ability to identify individuals who intentionally evade the law, allowing us to focus our enforcement efforts on these individuals and, in turn, provide better protection for workers, without the need for additional resources.

Again, we appreciated the opportunity to present Senate Bill 68. Please contact my office if you have further questions.

Sincerely,



Tanya Keith
Director, Labor Standards and Safety

cc: Jordan Shilling, Director, Governor's Legislative Office