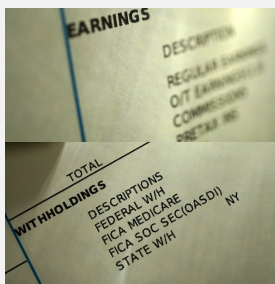


NEWSLETTER

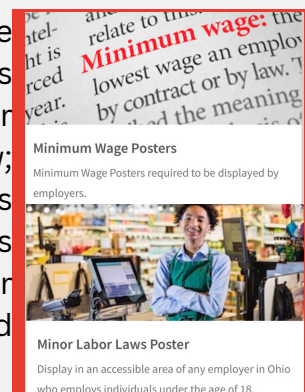
WORKERS' LEGISLATIVE, PUBLIC POLICY, AND LABOR NEWS-RELATED ISSUES

By Michael Smalz, COWC Board Member



Pay Stubs – House Bill 106 requires Ohio employers to provide pay stubs to their employees. COWC Director of Programs, Claudia Cortez, recently submitted written testimony to the House Commerce and Labor Committee in support of HB 106. She stated in her testimony that providing pay stubs helps prevent wage theft, provides crucial evidence in case of wage disputes, plays a vital role in promoting financial literacy among workers, and promotes equal treatment and fairness in the workplace.

Senate Bill 96 allows employers to post certain labor law notices on the internet instead of conspicuously posting such notices in the employer's place or places of employment. Those notices include Ohio's Minor Labor Law; Ohio's Minimum Fair Wage Standards Law; Ohio's Civil Rights Law; Ohio's Prevailing Wage Law; Ohio's Workers' Compensation Law; and Ohio's Public Employment Risk Reduction Program Law. The Ohio Senate has passed SB 96, and it is now pending before the House Commerce and Labor Committee. The House Committee has already heard sponsor and proponent testimony on an identical House Bill, HB 273.



Higher Education – Senate Bill 83 overhauls Ohio's higher education system. The Senate has passed SB 83, and it is now pending before the House Higher Education Committee. The bill bans public universities in Ohio from having "bias" in the classroom and limiting what "controversial topics" can be taught. The Senate-passed version prevented all university employees from striking, but over the summer, that was changed

to prohibit only full-time faculty from striking. The sponsor has now agreed to remove any anti-striking provisions from the bill, but it has a new provision that would prevent unions from negotiating and tenure. Also, the new provision will allow universities to fire tenured professors for a broad list of reasons.



Raising State Minimum Wage

Democratic legislators recently introduced Senate Bill 146, which would increase the state's minimum wage to \$12 an hour starting in 2024; \$13 starting in 2025; \$14 starting in 2026; and \$15 in 2027. One dollar each year until it was up to \$15.



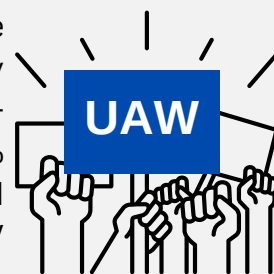
Unemployment benefits to striking workers - SB 180

seeks to amend Ohio's unemployment compensation law to provide unemployment benefits to striking workers..



Prompt Pay Act for Construction Work – House Bill 203 would require private owners of construction projects to pay contractors within 30 days after receiving a request for payment, except that if the plans require government approval, payment is required no sooner than 30 days after work is certified as compliant with architectural or engineering standards. It applies 18% annual interest on payments not timely made, and, if payments are not timely made and a lawsuit is filed, the court may (but is not required to) order the defendant property owner to pay the contractor's attorney's fees. The House Commerce and Labor Committee has passed HB 203.

Successful UAW Strike - After a 45-day strike, UAW members won huge concessions from Ford, Stellantis and GM, including substantial general pay increases (with bigger wage increases for lower-paid workers); an annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA); elimination or reduction of wage tiers; a 150% wage increase for temp workers over the life of the contract; increased retirement benefits, the right to strike over plant closures, and adding EV battery plants to the UAW contract.




A National Labor Relations Board judge recently ruled that Starbucks Corp. broke federal labor law when it boosted wages and benefits only for workers in non-unionized stores across the US last year. Locally, workers at the Pickerington Public Library, the Franklin County Public Defender's Office, and the Starbucks location at 3850 North High Street are seeking union recognition.

NLRB Final Rule on Joint-Employer Status – On October 26, 2023, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) adopted a final rule setting forth a new standard for determining whether a business may be considered a joint employer of a group of employees. Under the new standard, a business may be considered a joint employer of a group of employees if each business has an employment relationship with the employees and they share or co-determine one or more of the employees' essential terms and conditions of employment, which are defined as (1) wages, benefits and other compensation; (2) hours of work and scheduling; (3) the assignment of job duties; (4) the supervision of the performance of duties; (5) work rules and directions governing the performance of duties and grounds for discipline; (6) the tenure of employment, including hiring and discharge; and (7) working conditions related job safety and health. This new rule considers the alleged joint employer's authority to control essential terms and conditions of employment, whether such control is exercised, and without regard to whether any such exercise of control is direct or indirect. This rule becomes effective on December 26, 2023. It will make it easier for employees of franchisees, staffing agencies, or subcontractors to try to organize unions and engage in collective bargaining with larger potential joint employers such as franchisors (McDonald's, Starbucks, etc.), general contractors, or companies relying on staffing agency workers.

ECUADOR

New Family Reunification Parole Process for Ecuador – On October 18, 2023, DHS announced a new family Reunification parole process for certain nationals of Ecuador. The new process is for certain Ecuadorian nationals whose family members are US citizens or lawful permanent residents and have received approval to join the family in the United States. Specifically, Ecuadorian nationals and their immediate family members can be considered for parole and employment authorization on a case-by-case basis for a period of up to three years while they wait to apply to become a lawful permanent resident.



Temporary Protected Status (TPS)

VENEZUELA

Extension of Venezuela's 2021 TPS designation - On September 29, 2023, DHS announced an 18-month extension of Venezuela's 2021 TPS designation and a separate redesignation of Venezuela for TPS. The Federal Register notice explains how to register for TPS under Venezuela's redesignation and how to re-register for the extension. Individuals may be eligible if they have continuously resided in the United States on or before

July 31, 2023. Venezuelan nationals who arrived in the United States after July 31, 2023, are not eligible for TPS and are subject to deportation. Other significant developments include a new deal between the US government and Venezuela to relax sanctions against Venezuela; that agreement allows the United States to fly Venezuelan deportees home for the first time in years. In addition, on September 20, the Biden administration announced that it is expediting work authorizations for Venezuelan migrants.

Proposed Rule to Modernize H-2 Temporary Visa Programs – Under the proposed regulations, employers who violate H-2B requirements are ineligible for the limited number of available visas. Additionally, the proposed rule would clarify prohibitions on employer-imposed fees and strengthen the employer penalties on prohibited fees being collected by employers or recruiters from H-2 workers, protecting workers from incurring exploitive debts and preventing abuse. Further, DHS is proposing greater flexibility for H-2 workers by extending grace periods for seeking new employment, preparing for departure from the United States, or seeking a change of immigration status. The proposed rule would also offer several benefits to employers, including making H-2 portability permanent, which would allow employers who are facing worker shortages to hire H-2 workers who are already lawfully in the United States while the employer's H-2 petition for the worker is pending.



Immigrant Child Exploitation – Federal agents recently found more than two dozen undocumented children illegally working in a poultry plant in Kidron, Ohio. They were mainly from Guatemala and were working in meat processing and sanitation at the plant, which produces Amish Farm Chicken.

Proposed Ms. L Settlement – On October 16, 2023, the United States reached a settlement in *Ms. L. et al. v. ICE, et al.*, a lawsuit filed in 2018 seeking injunctive **relief relating to the separation of parents and children at the Southwest border**. The proposed settlement, subject to court approval, will provide for the continued reunification of families, set forth standards to limit future separations and provide certain benefits to class members. Except where otherwise specified, the settlement will remain in effect for six years after the effective date. The proposed benefits include: the government agreeing to extend ongoing parole eligibility for class members reunified with their separated parent; providing behavioral health services for three years; covering the cost of the copayments incurred by class members when receiving medical services at Federally Qualified Health Centers for 12 months; providing temporary housing support during a 12-month eligibility period; and providing free immigration legal services to class members and their families.

Central Ohio Worker Center Earns a Prestigious Award

By Diana Agyei (Volunteer)



The Central Ohio Worker Center (COWC) was honored to receive the 2023 Latino Heritage Month Esperanza de la Comunidad Award. This award, given by the Members of the Columbus City Council, is a prestigious recognition that acknowledges the outstanding efforts of those who work tirelessly to improve the lives of the Latino community. It highlights leaders and organizations who positively impact the future of Latinos in Columbus and embody “esperanza” and “raíces”. Specifically, The Esperanza de la Comunidad Award is awarded to an organization that promotes the well-being of the Latino community, is led by Latinos/as and not only advocates for our community but provides services and opportunities that ensure its betterment.

This year, Councilmember Lourdes Barroso de Padilla recognized COWC as the honoree at El Futuro/The Future Art Show on Friday, October 13th. Claudia Cortez, Director of Programs, and Isbel Alvarado, Case Manager, accepted the award. Attendees were treated to good music and inspiring stories of dedication, compassion, and resilience. The event brought together community leaders, activists, and supporters who share the goal of creating a brighter future for Latinos in Columbus.

The COWC team appreciates Columbus City Council for this incredible recognition. The center’s director, Claudia Cortez, said, “We are humbled to receive the 2023 Latino Heritage Month Esperanza de la Comunidad Award, an award presented to individuals and organizations for their outstanding contributions to the Latino community. There is still much work to be done, and we will continue to build bridges and break down barriers for workers.” Living up to the center’s mission, we will continue to work to fill a crucial gap in our community by educating, empowering, and advocating for and with low-wage and immigrant workers in Central Ohio.

Central Ohio Worker Center Empowers Dominican Learning Center Students with Know Your Rights in the Workplace Training

By Diana Agyei (Volunteer)

The Central Ohio Worker Center, committed to promoting workplace rights and justice through empowering, educating, and advocating for low-wage and immigrant workers, partnered with the Dominican Learning Center to provide comprehensive Know Your Rights in the Workplace Training sessions for ESL students, which will equip them for their current and future workplaces.

The training was provided to over 200 Dominican Learning Center students to educate them on their workplace rights, the need for grassroots organizing to address employment-related issues, and empowering them to advocate for fair labor practices. The training covered various topics, including the right to receive proper payment, discrimination-free and healthy workplaces, joining with coworkers to improve workplace conditions, and receiving workers' compensation. Claudia Cortez, Director of Programs, and Isbel Alvarado, Case Manager and Community Organizer, ensured that the students understood the resources provided by COWC in connecting them with the appropriate government office, attorney, or worker action expert. Additionally, COWC shared job opportunities with labor partners. Throughout the sessions, attendees actively participated in interactive discussions, allowing them to grasp the practical application of the training in various workplace situations.

The Central Ohio Worker Center is well-known for its advocacy and educational efforts to empower workers and promote fair labor practices. Their collaboration with the Dominican Learning Center is part of a broader initiative to educate our low-wage and immigrant workers in our community so that participants in the workforce or entering the workforce are well-informed and prepared to assert their rights. So far, the training has received positive feedback from participants, and it is expected to become a recurring fixture.

In an era where labor rights continue to be a pressing issue, especially for low-wage and immigrant workers, it is imperative for organizations to demonstrate a shared commitment to ensuring that the rights of workers are upheld and respected. By educating and empowering our community, the COWC contributes to a brighter and more equitable future for the workforce in Central Ohio.



Central Ohio Worker Center Shines at the 2023 EARNCon

The Central Ohio Worker Center had the opportunity to present again at the Economic Analysis and Research Network annual conference (EARNCon), held this year in Detroit. This annual gathering of researchers, policy analysts, and grassroots organizers from around the country is known for showcasing collaboration, expertise, campaigns, and stories to help people think through their organizing journeys; this year was no exception.

Claudia and Isbel participated as panelists in the Workshop Session –The Power of Organizing: How to Build a Plan to Win. Claudia and Isbel shared organizing techniques that led the COWC from being a small volunteer-led organization to a three-staff organization with true credibility in the community. Also, Isbel led a discussion on the Wage Theft and Prevention Ordinance in Columbus and Claudia about the efforts and strategies in Ohio to increase the minimum wage.



In this workshop session, participants learned more about organizing and developing a plan to win in small groups. Also, we encouraged participants to think through the organizing process and provide helpful techniques for campaigns of all sizes. By hearing from partners within the network and from us, participants left agitated for change, equipped with resources to organize and advocacy strategies that will help regardless of whether groups have internal organizing staff or work with external partners.

EARNCon 2023 laid the groundwork needed for a state- and local-worker-centered research and policy agenda for 2024 and beyond, highlighting approaches and solutions for racial, economic, and gender justice.

Rising Stronger: A Celebration of Worker Unity and Solidarity!

Let us also recognize the incredible achievement of United Auto Workers (UAW) union workers who stood together in the battle of their contract negotiation. President Shawn Fain and the entire union have been fearlessly fighting for the rights of automotive workers during the recent strikes! Their dedication and unwavering commitment have resulted in a groundbreaking contract negotiation, securing historic pay raises and benefits for UAW workers.

Together, we are witnessing the power of unity and determination. Let's celebrate this incredible milestone and express our gratitude to UAW Workers and President Fain for their commitment and dedication to fight for the rights and improve the lives of the working people and their families.



From left to right, Hannah Halbert, Executive Director of Policy Matters Ohio, Isbel Alvarado, COWC Case Manager, Shawn Fain UAW president, Claudia Cortez, COWC Director of Programs and Molly Shack OOC Co-Executive Director.

Let's remember that together can create a future where workers are united, empowered and unstoppable!

COWC tables at the Mexican Consulate to Empower Local Community

By Diana Agyei (Volunteer)

In order not to leave any low-wage and migrant worker behind when it comes to empowering, educating, and advocating for worker justice, the COWC is bent on taking advantage of every community event to make valuable resources and information available for everyone. This is the reason for making sure we are part of every community event. Last October, in a commendable display of community partnership, COWC tabled at the Mexican Consulate Event in collaboration with Columbus Public Health, Center for Public Health Innovation. At this resourceful outreach event, COWC provided valuable information to local Mexican community members.

The event, which took place at the Columbus Public Health Parsons Avenue Ohio Department of Health location in Columbus, aimed to create an accessible platform for Mexican community members to receive valuable information and learn on a range of topic about workers rights resources, access to legal services, immigration, labor rights, and social services.

Community members and attendees had the opportunity to engage with our team, who shared important information, making it a one-stop resource table for individuals seeking assistance and support for workplace justice. This kind of community event that enables low-wage and immigrant workers to receive valuable information, the COWC not only sees it as a resource-sharing endeavor but also highlights the importance of community organizations working together to empower local residents. The outreach event featured an array of informational pamphlets on Know Your Rights at the workplace.



Martin de Porres Center's Resource Event

COWC tabled at the Martin de Porres Center resource event on Saturday, November 4th, 2023, along with other great community organizations. We shared COWC resources and information with the community. COWC will continue prioritizing intentional collaborations and authentic relationship building to better serve the low-wage and immigrant workers.



Justice for Migrant Women Community Meeting

COWC believes intentional collaborations, authentic relationship building, and a collaborative strategy result in wins for our community. Accordingly, we joined Justice for Migrant Women in their Community Meeting hosted in Columbus on November 15th. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss issues affecting migrant women in the workplace and in our communities while we share resources and information.



Apprenticeship Week Celebration

We also joined Creating Central Ohio Futures and Columbus Building Trades on November 14th at Teamster to celebrate National Apprenticeship Week, share apprenticeship opportunities, and COWC resources and information.



Reflections on a Year of Progress: Gratitude for Supporting the Empowerment of Low-Wage and Immigrant and Workers

As we approach the end of the year, it is important to remember that our work is not over. While we have made significant progress, there are still many challenges ahead. The fight for the rights of immigrant and low-wage workers continues. We need your continued support to keep moving forward.

In the coming year, we pledge to continue fighting for fair wages, safe working conditions, labor justice and opportunities for growth for all workers. We will work tirelessly to advocate for policies that protect and empower low-wage and immigrant workers, and we will continue to provide resources and support to those who need it most.

We are also committed to strengthening our partnerships and collaborations with other organizations and grassroots and union leaders. We recognize that we are stronger together, and that only through unity and solidarity can we achieve lasting change.

As we move into the new year, we invite you to join us in our mission. Whether through donations, volunteering, or simply raising awareness of our cause, every small act of support makes a difference. Together, we can continue to build the power of low-wage and migrant workers and create a more just and equitable future for all.

Thank you for your continued support. Without you, we could not have achieved it. Let us continue our commitment to improving the lives of immigrant and low-wage workers together with determination and gratitude.

Once again, thank you for your unwavering support. Let us move forward together, with determination and gratitude, in our commitment to improve the lives of low-wage and immigrant workers. I leave you with a quote from Nelson Mandela:


"What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is the difference we have made in the lives of others that will determine the worthiness of the life we lead."

In solidarity, united we stand!

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 COWCenter



We encourage you to get involved by volunteering, becoming a member and contributing.

www.centralohioworkercenter.org/get-involved