

[Home](#) / US Department of Labor, New Jersey Department of Labor Strategic Enforcement Initiative Combats Illegal Child Labor

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 1, 2024

TRENTON – The U.S. Department of Labor’s [Wage and Hour Division](#) and the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development have launched a joint strategic enforcement initiative to combat violations of [federal](#) and [state](#) child labor laws. Preventing violations involving [children working in dangerous jobs](#) is an urgent priority for both agencies.

Officials in Washington D.C. and Trenton are [focused on industries with a history of non-compliance](#) with existing laws and where vulnerable workers are less likely to file complaints with federal or state agencies. This approach augments each department’s existing complaint-driven enforcement actions.

“At the Wage and Hour Division, our priority is protecting the most vulnerable workers in our country, our children,” **said Wage and Hour Administrator Jessica Looman**. “We will use strategic enforcement, innovation, and every available tool to hold any employer who tries to profit by using illegal child labor accountable.”

Since 2019, the U.S. Department of Labor has seen an 88 percent increase nationwide in children employed illegally. In fiscal year 2023, federal investigators identified 955 child labor violations nationwide with 5,792 children at risk – including 502 working in hazardous occupations illegally – and assessed more than \$8 million in penalties for employers found in violation. The two agencies will collaborate on investigations to address violations of child labor laws in New Jersey proactively.

“Along with our partners at the U.S. Department of Labor, we are firmly committed to protecting the Garden State’s young workers from unlawful, illegal and hazardous working conditions,” **said NJDOL Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo**. “By prioritizing the welfare of these vulnerable workers, we are also laying the groundwork for safer, more just working environments across the board.”

Since January 2020, NJDOL has assessed over 500 businesses with violations of child labor laws. Based on the most recent data collected in 2022, over [70,000](#) children are employed by private, for-profit companies in the state. The goal of this strategic enforcement initiative is to uncover violations that may otherwise go unreported.

As part of the strategic enforcement initiative, the Wage and Hour Division and NJDOL will continue to provide outreach and education to all employers and workers about protections for young workers. Understanding federal and state child labor laws ensures that employers can prevent child labor violations and keep young workers safe as they gain valuable experience in the workplace. The department and NJDOL remain committed to working with key stakeholders to enforce business practices that ensure compliance with federal and state laws for all young workers, regardless of where they are from.

Visit NJDOL’s [Young Workers webpage](#) for more information on New Jersey’s child labor laws.

Agency

Wage and Hour Division

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