

# **Attorney General Raoul Calls on Federal Government to Suspend Implementation of Joint Employer Rule Amid COVID-19 Pandemic**

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CHICAGO — Attorney General Kwame Raoul joined a coalition of 18 attorneys general in urging the federal government to immediately stop the implementation of the Joint Employer Rule, a new rule that undermines key labor protections for workers.

In the letter, Raoul and the coalition argue that workers who earn hourly wages—and who would be most adversely affected by the rule—are also those most likely to suffer the adverse economic impacts caused by COVID-19, such as having hours reduced or being laid off.

“Implementing a rule that strips protections from workers is particularly unconscionable during the COVID-19 crisis,” Raoul said. “I urge the federal government to suspend the implementation of this rule to ensure the continued protection of workers during this unprecedented time.”

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) acknowledged last week that the unprecedented 3.28 million Americans who filed for unemployment benefits for the first time was due to the impacts of the COVID-19 virus. The DOL also acknowledged that under the new rule, workers may not be able to collect back wages when employers become bankrupt. Raoul and the coalition assert that the current economic crisis combined with the new rule will seriously impede workers' ability to collect back wages.

In February 2020, Raoul and the coalition filed a lawsuit challenging a DOL rule that unlawfully narrows the joint employment standard under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). The FLSA is the federal law that establishes a baseline of critical workplace protections, such as minimum wage and overtime, for workers across the country. The joint employment standard determines when more than one employer is responsible under FLSA because both exert sufficient influence over a worker's employment. This change would undermine critical workplace protections for the country's low- and middle-income workers and could lead to increased wage theft and other labor law violations.

The letter builds on Attorney General Raoul's efforts to fight unlawful employment practices. At the beginning of this year, a new law became effective that formally establishes the Worker Protection Unit within the Attorney General's office and provides the unit with the authority to enforce existing laws that protect workers' rights in Illinois. Attorney General Raoul encourages workers who have concerns about potentially unsafe working conditions to call his Workplace Rights Hotline at 1-844-740-5076 or file a complaint online.

Joining Raoul in the letter are the attorneys general California, Colorado, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington.