



July 23, 2023

President Joe Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20500

**RE: Defend Child Labor Standards**

Dear Sir,

**I am writing to you out of a deep concern about the weakening of labor laws protecting children.**

Historically, children often had to work under very dangerous conditions in coal mines, glass factories, and machine shops. They developed black lung disease, became sick from toxic fumes, lost limbs or fingers, or were even killed in workplace accidents. As if these dangers were not bad enough, in nearly every case, child labor also cuts children off from adequate schooling and health care, severely limiting their long-term life prospects.

**The Federal *Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938***, one of the last legislative achievements of the New Deal, gave us the standard workweek, established a minimum wage, and **outlawed child labor** by setting the general age to enter the workforce at 16. According to a June 26, 2023 U.S. News & World Report article, "A movement to weaken American child labor protections at the state level began in 2022. By June 2023, Arkansas, Iowa, New Jersey and New Hampshire had enacted this kind of legislation, and lawmakers in at least another eight states have introduced similar measures."

Most recently Iowa governor Kim Reynolds signed into law one of the most exploitative roll backs of child labor laws we have seen in decades. In addition to extending the number of hours teenagers are allowed to work, it allows kids into ultra-dangerous meatpacking facilities, high-volume Pepsi bottling plants, and building demolition and construction sites where more than 5,000 workers died last year. Your Administration's Department of Labor (DOL) found numerous provisions in the Iowa legislation that are in direct conflict with federal labor law. Most of the conflict arises from laws loosening the hours and places 14- and 15-year-olds are allowed to work. For example, provisions allowing minors to work six hours a day and until 9pm during the school year, and work in meat freezers and industrial laundries, are directly prohibited by federal law.

It is not just Iowa. Across the country special interest groups representing corporations are pushing bills that would weaken child labor laws. Groups such as the National Restaurant Association, National Federation of Independent Business, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Koch-funded Americans for Prosperity have all spent millions of dollars in support of rolling back child labor laws.

As we mark the 85th anniversary of the *Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938*, as a society we must honor the legacy of this historic legislation by standing up to corporate greed and protecting kids from exploitative business practices. **I want to thank you for the efforts your Administration is taking to defend labor standards and urge you to encourage and prod your Administration to continue and expand upon that work. I also urge you to use your "Bully Pulpit" to denounce the weakening of child labor laws and educate the public on the dangers of weakening laws that protect children. We must all take seriously our obligation to nurture, teach, and keep our nation's children safe from exploitation.**

Thank you

(Print Name & Address) \_\_\_\_\_

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