

LABOR VIOLATIONS IN THE LOS ANGELES GARMENT INDUSTRY, DEC. 2020

THE REPORTS KEY FINDINGS INCLUDE:

FOOD INSECURITY

89% of garment workers surveyed expressed worry about where their next meal would come from.

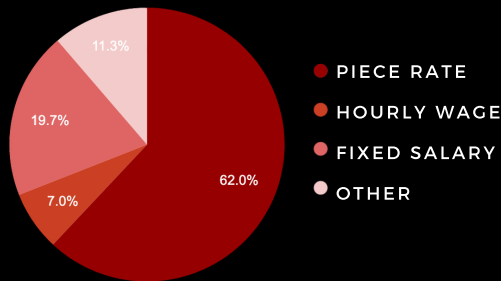
RENT CONCERNS

93% of garment workers surveyed expressed worry about how they would pay rent.

GARMENT WORKERS REPORT:

- **THAT THEY ARE NOT AFFORDED TIME TO WASH THEIR HANDS OR CLEAN THEIR STATIONS**
- **BATHROOMS LACK SOAP**
- **EMPLOYERS ARE FAILING TO ENSURE SOCIAL DISTANCING, NOT PROVIDING MASKS, AND NOT PROVIDING PAID SICK LEAVE.**

METHODS OF PAYMENT OF WAGES SEEN IN GWC WAGE THEFT CLAIMS:



AVERAGE HOURLY WAGE **\$5.85**

Some low-wage workers with wage theft claims filed as recently as 2019 are earning as little as \$2.68 an hour through the piece rate system of pay.

FOR THE AVERAGE 57.14 HOUR WORK WEEK, WORKERS ARE PAID **\$334**

AVERAGE WAGES STOLEN WEEKLY FROM GARMENT WORKERS **\$602**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Los Angeles is home to the United States largest garment manufacturing hub, with over 46,000 garment workers, largely immigrant women from Mexico and Central America. Fashion businesses based in the US and around the world rely on over 4,000 contractors and manufacturers for the production, finishing, and distribution of apparel products, utilizing LA's well-situated twin ports in addition to its skilled low-wage labor workforce, including a growing number of fashion businesses invested in sustainable practices and ethical domestic production.

But systemic problems plaguing garment workers threaten the long-term viability of the industry, such as insufficient pay and occupational hazards, including blocked exits, poor ventilation, unsanitary worksites, and cramped conditions, and have been exacerbated by and in turn intensified the current Covid-19 public health crisis. Thousands of garment workers, deemed essential for the production of masks and PPE, have been forced to choose between earning desperately needed yet sub-minimum wages while risking exposure to the virus, at the same time being denied sick leave, health care, and hazard pay.

In *Labor Violations in the Los Angeles Garment Industry, December 2020*, Garment Worker Center (GWC) reports on the impact of wage theft and the Covid-19 pandemic on garment workers.

GWC conducted two needs assessments with over 300 garment workers between March and August of 2020 to gather insight into the effects of the pandemic on LA's garment workers. An analysis of 142 wage theft claims filed recently through the Center's Wage Justice Clinic provided a stark view of the impact of the piece-rate, an archaic yet prevalent system of pay which for too long has kept minimum wage out of reach many of LA's garment workers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

PASS THE GARMENT WORKER PROTECTION ACT

AUTHORED BY SENATOR DURAZO AND ASSEMBLYMEMBERS GONZALEZ AND KALRA

Three major components of the Garment Worker Protection Act (GWPA) will close loopholes in the law: (1) Eliminating the piece-rate pay in the garment industry; (2) Expanding liability for wage theft; (3) Expanding the Labor Commissioner's Bureau of Field Enforcement ability to investigate and cite guarantors.