



March 4, 2024

ATTN: Senator McEwen  
Chair, Senate Labor Committee  
Minnesota State Capitol, 10 State Office Building  
75 Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard  
St Paul, MN 55155

Dear Senator McEwen,

We are writing to you in support of your child labor enforcement reform legislation SF 4384. The United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 663 represents roughly 5,000 meatpacking workers in the state of Minnesota. UFCW Local 663 represents 17,000 essential workers in total, including retail grocery stores, food cooperatives, retail, and healthcare facilities. We strive to improve the lives of our members and of all working families by fighting for economic, political, and social justice in our workplaces and communities.

SF 4384 will allow the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) Commissioner the additional tools necessary to enforce violations of child labor law.

Today child labor and employment violations are on the rise across the country, especially in the meatpacking industry and Minnesota has seen violations. For example, Tony Downs Foods— which produces an array of fully cooked and frozen protein meals hired eight children to do illegal hazardous work, including operating a meat grinder and forklifts on the graveyard shift. The company subsequently agreed to a \$300,000 fine and three-year compliance program with DLI.<sup>1</sup>

The labor in the meatpacking industry is performed overwhelmingly by immigrants. These families contribute to local economies, pay taxes, and do the hard work along America's food supply chains. The children found working at Tony Downs Foods are immigrants and deserve better. Meatpacking plants are not safe places for children to work because it exposes children to injury and harms their chances to receive a proper education, building better opportunities for their families, the community, and the well-being of all.

UFCW Local 663 has called on Tony Downs Foods to establish a child wellbeing fund through the collective bargaining process. The fund establishes up to \$50,000 per year to help kids in the

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<sup>1</sup>

<https://www.dli.mn.gov/news/meat-processing-company-agrees-300000-administrative-penalty-three-year-compliance-program>

community. UFCW Local 663 will work with community partners to determine what would be appropriate to build in their communities.

This legislation is necessary for our state and comes at a time when employers like Tony Downs Foods have demonstrated a neglect for child labor and employment law. UFCW Local 663 encourages the enactment of this legislation to protect the well-being of the children in our state regardless of immigration status.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Rena' followed by a stylized 'W'.

Rena Wong  
President  
UFCW LOCAL 663