

Celebrating Two Years of the
California Fast Food Council &
Facing the Crisis in Fast Food



California Fast Food Workers Union, SEIU
March 2026

Contents

- Fast Food Workers Speak Page 5
- The Road to the Fast Food Council & the Path Ahead Page 10
- Fast Food Worker Priorities. Page 14
 - Protect Our Pay Page 21
 - Fair Scheduling Protections Page 24
 - Ownership Change/Closure Protections Page 28
 - Investigate Pervasive Abuses Page 30
 - Participation in the Fast Food Council Page 88
- Now is the time Page 89
- Endnotes. Page 90



Letter from Angelica Hernandez Fast Food Council Member

March 2026

Dear Governor Newsom,

California fast food workers dedicate this book to you in commemoration of the historic victory we accomplished together – the passage of AB-1228.

A centerpiece of your leadership to improve the lives of working Californians struggling to pay the rent and raise a family, AB-1228 raised the fast food minimum wage to \$20 per hour.¹ And it worked!

You raised standards for fast food workers and our families, and the sky didn't fall on the California fast food industry. In fact, the California fast food industry has grown remarkably. When we succeed, our companies succeed.

Michael Hiltzik called it when he described the fast food industry's numbers as "baloney, sliced thick".² **In the first year since the fast food minimum wage went into effect, California added new fast food stores three times faster than the rest of the country, with a third of all new fast food stores in the USA added in California – an increase of 2,480 California locations.**³ At the same time, fast food employment in California has remained stable,⁴ and the top 10 publicly-traded fast food companies in California had combined 2025 operating profits totaling over \$25 billion.⁵

The road to the Fast Food Council was long. Workers at over 450 fast food restaurants around the state went on strike demanding solutions to our most pressing problems, not just at the stores where we work, but for fast food restaurants industry-wide across California.⁶

AB-1228 established the first-in-the-nation Fast Food Council, empowered to set industry-wide minimum standards to address the hazards and abuses California's 630,000 fast food workers face every day.⁷ As we mark the two-year anniversary of the first meeting of the Fast Food Council, I remember the surge of pride and excitement we felt at having won a seat at the table.

Since then, however, the hazards and abuses have continued, and fast food workers have filed over 100 new complaints with state and local agencies documenting the ongoing workplace violations that hurt us, our families and our customers.⁸ When Antonia and her coworkers at McDonald's reported rats running around the kitchen, management responded by posting a sign forbidding workers to take photos or videos.⁹ Cesar worked thousands of hours at Subway unpaid and off the clock until he talked to a union organizer who told him he doesn't have to work for free.¹⁰ Management at the McDonald's where I work doesn't protect us from ongoing violent attacks¹¹ – the list goes on.

Recent complaints filed by fast food workers also describe how our lives are turned upside down by arbitrary and often-retaliatory schedule changes and firings when we try to use paid sick leave to care for loved ones, file wage claims for

bounced paychecks or report workplace violence, harassment and discrimination. Marco got fired after he joined 11 other coworkers at Taco Bell who filed a Wage Theft complaint reporting timekeeping manipulation, forged signatures on worker pay records and off-the-clock work.¹² Erika was fired from El Pollo Loco after she and her coworkers reported suffering heat illness when management didn't fix the broken AC, and an overtime avoidance scheme in which management had workers clocking in and out under multiple names.¹³ Gerardo was fired from Popeyes, lost his apartment and had to share a room and cut the money he was sending to support his mother when he got the flu and couldn't find a coworker willing to cover for him because management said the worker would have to clock in under another name to avoid receiving overtime pay.¹⁴

The Fast Food Council can take action now to start addressing these problems. The Council must adjust the fast food minimum wage for inflation, like every other minimum wage in California.¹⁵ It is unconscionable that the same fast food companies like McDonald's, Taco Bell, and Wendy's – whose CEOs are paid more for just a few minutes or hours work than we earn in a whole year¹⁶ – are leading the fight to deny us modest pay adjustments and independently-administered trainings to learn about our rights. The Fast Food Council is empowered to put policies in place to protect us from arbitrary schedule changes, and also must begin investigating fast food working conditions, to inform its ongoing work to set minimum industry standards.

As a long-time McDonald's worker and a member of the Fast Food Council, I see the rising level of fear felt by many Californians, including fast food workers, as ICE arrests and detains people in our streets and terrifies our communities. I also see that employers feel newly empowered to threaten us with calling ICE when we ask questions about paid sick leave or Workers Compensation, or report health and safety hazards. Edith, a worker at KFC, reported that when she asked management why her schedule was cut, management said if someone doesn't like the schedule, "immigration [enforcement] should throw them out."¹⁷ Management told Guadalupe that if ICE comes, workers can "hide in the garbage." We have all seen that anyone can be arrested or harmed by ICE, regardless of immigration status. It is more urgent than ever that the Fast Food Council support independently-administered Know Your Rights training that includes information for workers facing threats of immigration enforcement.

The promise of AB-1228 and the Fast Food Council is in view, but still not within reach. The Fast Food Council can only realize its potential by acting now to solve our most pressing problems – showing that California works for all Californians.

Sincerely,

Angelica Hernandez

About California Fast Food Workers

There are more than 630,000 workers in California's fast food restaurants.¹⁸ More than three quarters of California fast food workers are people of color, 56% are Latino/a, and two thirds are women.¹⁹ Twenty percent of California fast food workers are immigrants.²⁰

of **630,000**
fast food workers
in California:

75%
people of color

56%
Latino/a

66%
women

20%
immigrants

Protect Our Pay



I have been making sandwiches at McDonald's for 20 years, and I live on the brink of homelessness because I don't earn enough.

My expenses are very basic. I leave for work at 3:40 am when there isn't transit, so I pay for an Uber to work. I have to pay rent, the gas bill, electricity, and I barely have money for food, clothes or shoes. Sometimes I just pay the gas and hope the electricity doesn't get turned off. Sometimes I borrow money from friends to make it through the month, but then I pay them back and again I have no money. I haven't been able to save all these years, because I don't make enough and I have to send money to support my mother.

I joined with fast food workers across California to pass AB-1228 to establish the Fast Food Council. **There is a lot the Fast Food Council can do to make sure we get paid fairly and correctly, starting with putting in place the raise we need.**

— Herminia, McDonald's worker, Los Angeles

Fair Scheduling Protections

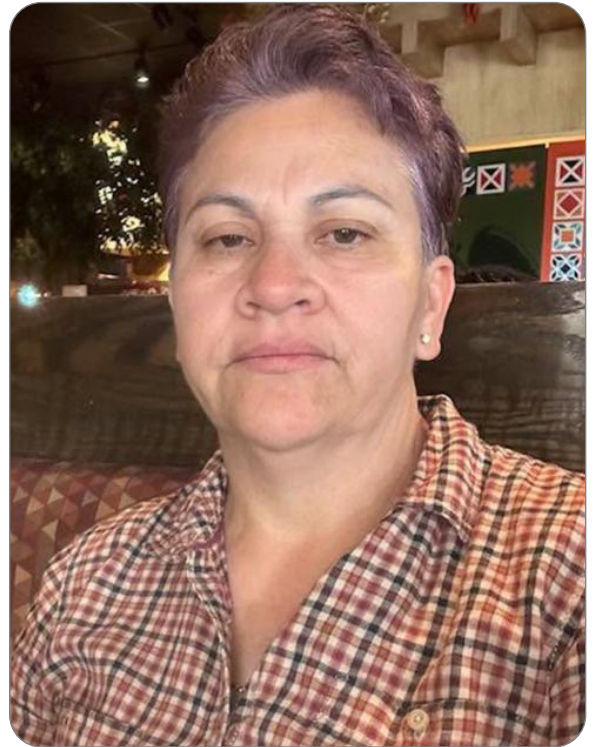
I am always exhausted from either working double shifts – over 14 hours per day – or from working “clopenings”, where I don’t have enough time to sleep because I close at one Burger King at 10 pm and open at another Burger King at 6:30 am.

Before the pandemic, I had a 5-day, Monday-through-Friday schedule at my main Burger King job that allowed me to rest between jobs. During the pandemic, my schedule was cut to 4 days, and then my 5-day schedule was restored with the addition of some weekend days, which barely gives me time to get from one Burger King job to another.

In December 2024 I saw that new workers were being hired, so I figured there was some flexibility in the schedule and I asked the owner at my main job to restore my Monday-through-Friday work schedule. In response, he retaliated against me, cutting my schedule back down to 4 days, and he gave my hours to new workers.

Schedule changes and cuts shouldn’t be used to punish workers – fast food workers like me need fair scheduling protections, so we can honor our commitments to our families, maintain our second jobs and have time to sleep.

—Veronica, Burger King worker, San Jose



Ownership Change/Closure Protections



Every time a fast food store changes owners or closes, workers' lives are turned upside down for no good reason.

When the McDonald's where I work closed in November 2025, I was so upset I could barely talk without breaking down into tears. Just before Thanksgiving more than 30 of us were notified that we were laid off, with no support from McDonald's to transfer our jobs to one of the many stores in the area, and no idea how we would get through the holidays or pay the rent.

In 2023, we all lost our paid sick leave from one day to the next when the ownership of the franchise changed. Some workers didn't get paid when the new owner refused to honor their sick pay requests. Think about it – it just doesn't make sense to leave everyone in a restaurant with no paid sick leave. What if stomach flu or another contagious illness starts running around the store? How can we rest and recover, if we can't pay the rent?

Fast food franchises are frequently bought, sold, transferred or closed. The way fast food companies treat us in these situations can help us thrive, or can disrupt the carefully-constructed arrangements we have for childcare, school, transportation and second jobs, and even push us and our families over the brink into homelessness.

The Fast Food Council is empowered to set minimum standards, so that ownership changes and closures happen on good terms – if we had more notice and support from McDonald's, we would have a better chance of transferring or finding another job, and not upsetting our arrangements for school, transportation, childcare and second jobs.

– Antonia, former McDonald's worker, Oakland

Investigate Pervasive Abuses

Imagine you see the store manager serving undercooked eggs to customers, and you worry the customers will get sick. You talk to the manager and he ignores you, so you tell the district manager, but nothing happens.

Imagine you show your manager the chicken nuggets being served are covered in mold, and he tells you to keep serving them.

Imagine management tells you they will fire you if you throw away food, so you can't throw away the chips when you see cockroaches walking on them.

Imagine you get diarrhea during your shift and your manager won't let you go home, and you have to keep preparing food in the kitchen.

Imagine you complain to management about these things, and instead of fixing them, they put warnings in your file.



At the same time, imagine that every day you experience relentless harassment – your manager complains about “fucking Mexicans” and gets angry when customers speak Spanish. And sometimes the manager gets so angry that he loses control. Once he got so mad at you he punched the wall, causing his knuckles to bleed. You are always in fear of the next outburst.

All these things have been happening to us at the Taco Bell where we work.

The Fast Food Council needs to start holding hearings about food safety, workplace violence, harassment and discrimination and other industry-wide problems, and start working to address them.

– *Gabriela & Isabela,*
Taco Bell workers, El Dorado Hills

Participation in the Fast Food Council



I am 51 years old, and every day my manager at KFC/Taco Bell says things like older workers are “stupid” and “useless,” she “wants to see more collagen,” and she wants to bring in younger workers. Fast food workers like me suffer indignities like this every day at work.

Most of the workers on the AM shift are older like me, and this work is how we support ourselves and our families. The manager cut my schedule, and when I asked about it, the manager said there wasn't much work, but I see that they are hiring new, younger workers at the same time that they are cutting schedules of older workers.

When my coworker, who is 57 years old, asked why her schedule was cut, management said if someone doesn't like the schedule, “immigration enforcement should throw them out.” The store manager also told me that if ICE comes to the store, workers can “hide in the garbage.”

We all know that ICE has arrested or harmed anyone, regardless of immigration status. And it is against the law for employers to allow ICE into non-public areas of the store without a warrant signed by a judge.

Management also harasses me because of my weight, they won't give me the uniforms I need in my size, and they said they were only ordering sizes Small and Medium because they want us to lose weight.

These schedule cuts, harassment and threats are the kinds of things the Fast Food Council needs to work on fixing.

Fast food workers like me need to know about the Fast Food Council, and how to participate.

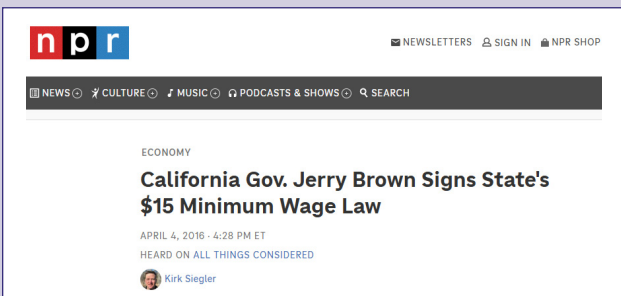
– *Guadalupe, KFC/Taco Bell worker, Sunnyvale*

The Road to the Fast Food Council...

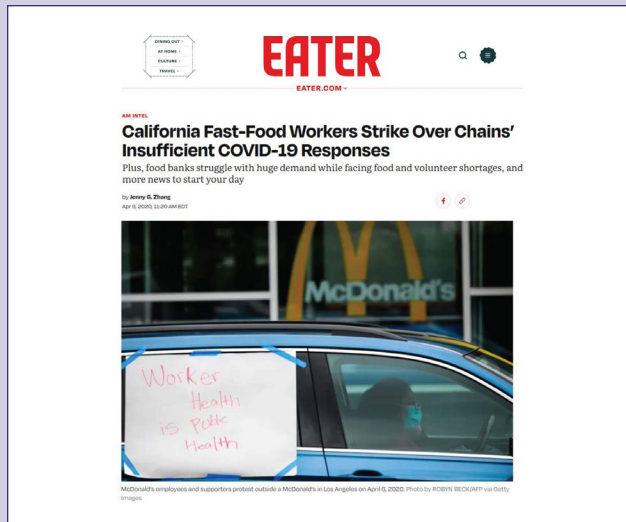
After 10 years of organizing and strikes by workers from over 450 fast food stores statewide, Governor Gavin Newsom's signature turned AB-1228 into state law, setting the \$20 per hour fast food minimum wage and establishing the Fast Food Council to raise industry standards to address workers' most pressing problems.²¹



2015 - Fast food workers in California begin 10 years of organizing with the Fight for \$15 and a Union to improve wages and working conditions.



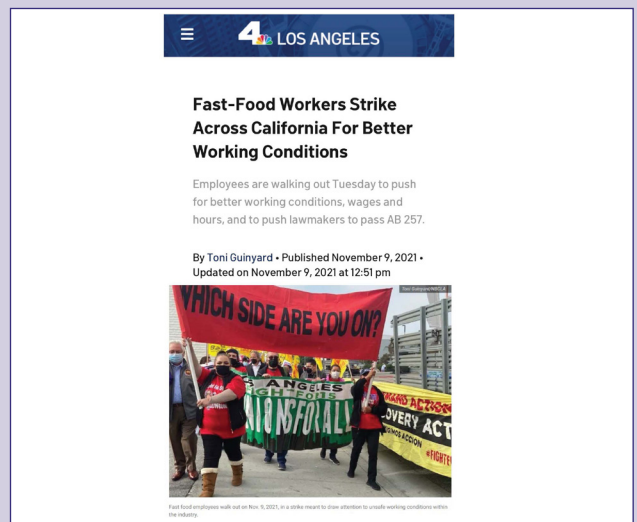
2016 - Governor Brown signs \$15 min wage bill, making California the first state to raise the minimum to \$15.00 per hour for all workers by 2022.



2020 - Fast food workers across California strike for COVID-19 safety. A judge closes the "Doggie Diaper McDonalds" in Oakland, where workers and their family members fell ill after being forced to work sick with COVID and being given dog diapers to use as PPE.



2020 - Lizzet Aguilar was fired for striking over unsafe COVID-19 conditions and filing health complaints at a McDonald's in Boyle Heights; she won her retaliation case in 2023.



2021 - Fast food workers strike repeatedly across California to push lawmakers to pass AB-257 to win a seat at the table to improve wages and working conditions.

KNOCK News Analysis Opinion Culture Incarceration Reporting Photo Essays


NEWS FOOD SERVICE LABOR STRIKE WORKERS RIGHTS

Fast Food Workers Strike to Protect Hard-Won Labor Law from Corporate Attacks

Workers fought for a law giving them a seat at the table. Now they say corporations are trying to trick voters into repealing the law.

Sarah Michelson | November 24, 2022

f p in



Fast food workers outside the Cypress Park Starbucks demanding to keep their seat at the negotiation table. (SOURCE: Sarah Michelson)

2022 - After Governor Newsom signs AB-257 into law, fast food workers strike to fight off corporate attacks.

Economic Policy Institute

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Working Economics Blog

Posted August 30, 2022 at 9:25 am by **Jennifer Sherer**

California's FAST Recovery Act is a victory for fast food workers and a model for state labor policy

f in p +

2022 - AB-257 - The FAST Act - is recognized nationally as a model for state labor policy.

The Washington Post

Democracy Dies in Darkness

High-schoolers allege long, late hours, child labor violations at Popeyes in Oakland

Popeyes on Thursday moved to close the store where the alleged child labor violations occurred

Updated May 18, 2023 More than 2 years ago

2023 - A Popeyes location in Oakland is closed by the parent corporation when evidence of child labor violations reach the media, showing that franchisors can take action to protect workers and ensure minimum labor standards are met.

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DIVE BRIEF

California Gov. Gavin Newsom signs \$20 fast food minimum wage into law

The deal, AB 1228, establishes a council with limited power to set the pace of wage increases until 2029, in what the SEIU calls a "historic" turn for labor.

Published Sept. 28, 2023

Aneurin Canham-Clyne
Reporter

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California Gov. Gavin Newsom speaks during a bill signing ceremony at Nido's Backyard Mexican Restaurant on February 09, 2023.

2023 - Governor Newsom signs AB-1228, establishing the \$20 fast food minimum wage and the first-in-the-nation Fast Food Council, giving fast food workers a seat at the table to set minimum standards to improve wages and working conditions.

... and the Path Ahead

In the two years since the commencement of the Fast Food Council, industry abuses continue unchecked for California's 630,000 fast food workers in this high-violation, low-wage industry.²²

Fast food workers look urgently to the Fast Food Council to raise industry standards.²³

The screenshot shows a Univision news page for the Bay Area. The main headline is "Protestan defensores de empleados de comida rápida en San José". The sub-headline reads: "Defensores de San José organizan una protesta para exigir un trato justo para los trabajadores de comida rápida, abordando violaciones laborales y buscando beneficios laborales." Below the text is a photograph of a group of people holding signs during a protest.

2024 - Fast food workers strike to enforce our rights and support policies for independently-administered Know Your Rights trainings.

The screenshot shows a Bay City News article. The headline is "Downtown Oakland McDonald's employees strike after store announces closure". The sub-headline says: "Employees of Downtown Oakland McDonald's went on strike Tuesday after the franchise owner announced closure of the location at the end of the month." There is a photo of two women, one in a pink shirt and one in a grey hoodie, talking to a reporter. A caption below the photo reads: "OAKLAND MCDONALD'S CLOSURE PROMPTS CONCERNS EMPLOYEES AT DOWNTOWN LOCATION STRIKE IN DEFENSE OF WORKERS' RIGHTS".

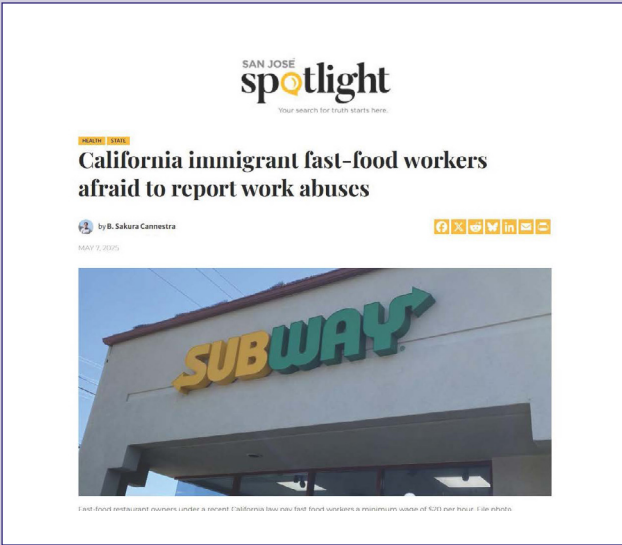
2025 - McDonald's workers urge Fast Food Council to protect them when stores are sold, transferred or closed.

The screenshot shows a KRON 4 news article. The headline is "Oakland McDonald's slapped with more fines over rodent infestation". The sub-headline says: "by: Lezla Gooden Posted: Aug 26, 2024 / 06:22 PM PDT Updated: Aug 27, 2024 / 10:45 AM PDT". Below the text is a photograph of a rat in a kitchen area.

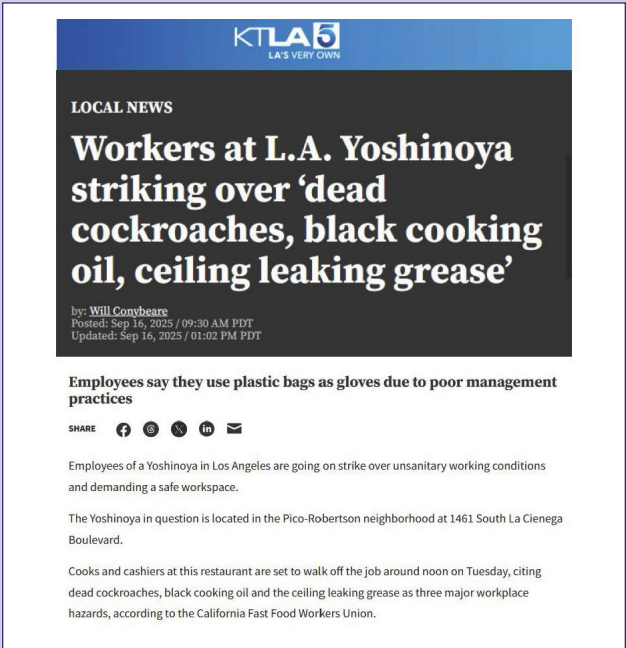
2024: McDonald's workers in Oakland blow whistle on rat infestation. The Health Dept closes the store, which is also fined by Cal/OSHA.

The screenshot shows a KQED news article. The headline is "Fast Food Workers Protest Alleged Wage Theft and Poor Work Conditions at San José Chain". The sub-headline says: "By Ayvan Ali Ahmad Sep 16, 2025 Updated Nov 17, 2025 Save Article". There is a photo of a woman in a purple shirt holding a flag during a protest.

2025 - El Pollo Loco workers strike over wage theft and excessive heat.



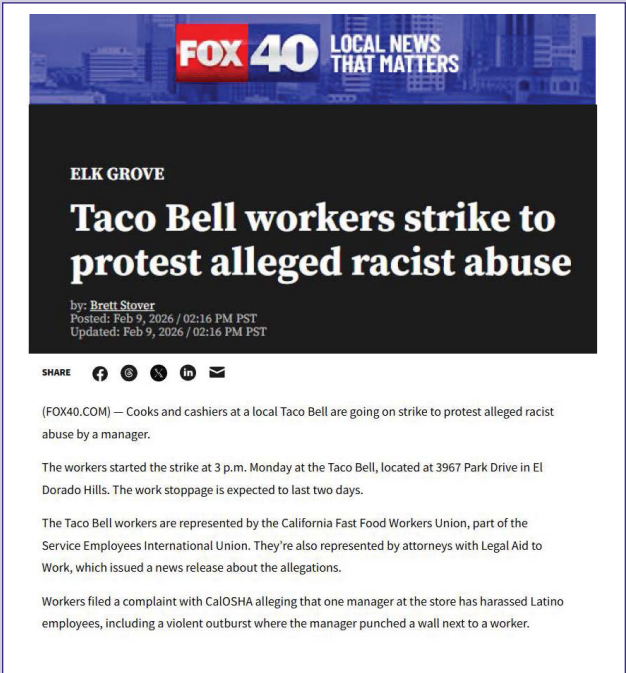
2025 - Workers across the USA fear President Trump's surge of immigration enforcement. Fast food employers are emboldened to threaten California fast food workers who report wage theft, harassment, discrimination and other abuses at work.



2025 - Yoshinoya workers strike over food safety and worker health and safety hazards.



2025 - Fast food workers continue to suffer sexual harassment, discrimination and sexual assault on the job.



2026 - Taco Bell workers strike over sex harassment, violence, racist abuse and food safety.

Fast Food Worker Priorities

Fast food worker leaders have communicated our priorities for action in three separate letters to the Fast Food Council, as well as in our statements and testimony at the Council.

On June 24, 2024, the Steering Committee of the California Fast Food Workers Union sent a letter to the Fast Food Council outlining fast food workers key recommendations for action:

1. Protect improvements in pay enacted through AB-1228;
2. Enact rules to increase scheduling stability to protect workers from arbitrary changes that exacerbate poverty and housing insecurity;
3. Ensure fast food workers are paid what they are owed, including pay and accrued leave, when owners sell, transfer or close their restaurants;
4. Begin a process to investigate the causes of, and potential solutions to, pervasive abuses in fast food, ranging from wage theft to harassment and discrimination, to unsafe workplaces; and,
5. Require employers to provide fast food workers with a means to reach all fast food workers in the state to invite their input into and receive updates on the Council's work.

On December 13, 2024, in a letter to Fast Food Council Chair Hardeman, SEIU Executive Vice President and Fast Food Council member Joseph Bryant added his voice to underscore the urgency of placing fast food workers' top priorities on the Fast Food Council agenda.

On January 24, 2025, the Steering Committee of the California Fast Food Workers Union sent another letter to the Fast Food Chair and Council Members addressing the need for process improvements to support the inclusion of Spanish-speaking participants at future meetings, and requested to place the topic of an annual raise for fast food workers on the agenda for consideration at the next Council meeting.



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To: **California Fast Food Council Members**

June 24, 2024

Dear Fast Food Council members:

We write on behalf of thousands of cooks and cashiers organizing with the California Fast Food Workers Union. Over the past month, the implementation of a \$20/hour industry wage has provided fast food workers and our families much-needed economic relief. But, we know that truly transforming fast food into a fairer, more sustainable industry takes more than a one-time raise.

During the first convening of the Fast Food Council in March, we were inspired to hear council members - from the worker advocates to the fast food franchisees - commit to working together and coming up with solutions that council member Johal said would be “beneficial to employees and employers at the same time.”

In that spirit, we urge the Council and staff to continue the positive momentum of the inaugural meeting and move to schedule regular meetings of the Council so that our representatives can continue to discuss urgent issues facing industry stakeholders. We are also calling on the Council to schedule a field hearing where workers, business owners and the public have the opportunity to participate in the Council process laid out by 2023’s AB 1228.

Before the next Council meeting, we are sharing recommendations reflecting our most urgent priorities:

- (1)** Act to protect improvements to fast food workers’ pay enacted through AB-1228;
- (2)** Enact rules to increase stability for fast food workers scheduled hours and prevent the frequent, arbitrary, and often-retaliatory changes that exacerbate the impacts of poverty and housing insecurity;
- (3)** Ensure fast food workers are paid what they are owed, including pay and accrued leave, when owners sell, transfer or close their restaurants;
- (4)** Begin a process to investigate the causes of, and potential solutions to, pervasive abuses in the fast food industry, ranging from wage theft to harassment and discrimination to unsafe workplaces;
- (5)** Require employers to provide the Council with means to reach all fast food workers in the state to invite their input into and receive updates on the council’s work.

The Governor's Future of Work Commission report names so much of what we all believe a job ought to offer: "a living wage, stable and predictable pay, control over scheduling, access to benefits, a safe and dignified work environment and opportunities for training and career advancement." Heeding our recommendations would do a great deal to improve the quality of fast food jobs in California and move those words from aspiration to concrete reality.

Sincerely,

California Fast Food Workers Union Steering Committee



WWW.CALIFORNIAFASTFOODWORKERSUNION.ORG

1545 WILSHIRE BLVD., SUITE 305 , LOS ANGELES, CA 90017



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December 13, 2024

Dear Chair Hardeman:

Nearly a year has passed since AB-1228 took effect, and it is deeply troubling to me that the Fast Food Council has yet to place a single, substantive matter related to the challenges faced by fast food workers on the Council's agenda – not for discussion or for action. I write to share what I understand to be fast food workers' justified frustration with our inaction to date and to propose a path forward.

As you know, our mandate under the [legislation creating the Fast Food Council](#) is to “establish fast food restaurant minimum standards on wages, and develop fast food restaurant minimum standards on working hours, and other working conditions adequate to ensure and maintain the health, safety, and welfare of, and to supply the necessary cost of proper living to, fast food restaurant workers.”

Six months ago, fast food workers provided us with [five written recommendations](#) to improve industry conditions. Those recommendations are plainly consistent with the powers and purview of the Fast Food Council. The testimonies of numerous worker commenters have underscored these recommendations, and members of the Council have asked repeatedly to place these issues on our agenda.

The time has come to shoulder our responsibility under the law. Specifically, I urge that you convene the Council this month, partly by videoconference if need be, to take up the following items, placing them on the agenda for discussion and possible action:

1. Establish the timing and amount of annual cost-of-living adjustment envisioned by the legislation.

As you know, consistent with many (if not all) of California's state and local minimum wage laws, AB-1228 anticipates that an annual cost-of-living pay increase will be applied as early as January 1, 2025. It is our job to discuss and apply the adjustment. Neglecting to put this matter on our agenda for discussion and a decision is unthinkable.

2. Discussion of concrete steps the Council can take to improve the stability of fast food workers' jobs.

Next steps:

- Please add the issue of annual cost-of-living adjustments to the agenda of the next meeting, and please vote to implement a 3.5% annual raise, a process envisioned by legislators who passed AB-1228, and which is consistent with substantially every minimum wage law in California. The Chair can and should add the item to the agenda with or without a subcommittee request to do so, and we especially urge you to do so now that employer-side Council members have begun a detailed discussion of the topic, which should not be or is not allowed without agendizing the issue.
- We respectfully ask that going forward, the Council implement measures to ensure all participants, regardless of primary language, can fully engage in public comment and the meeting as a whole. Please work with our union to make the needed operational changes.

We believe that open dialogue and scheduled discussions will enable both industry representatives and workers to collaborate effectively and improve our workplaces.

Sincerely,
California Fast Food Workers Union Steering Committee



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To: January 24, 2025
California Fast Food Chair and Council Members

Dear Chair and members of the Council,

We are writing to express the need for process improvements to support Spanish-speaking participants to future meetings, including subcommittee meetings; and to call on the Chair to place the topic of the annual raise for fast food workers on the agenda of the next Council meeting for consideration, without any restriction on what the Council can decide to do with that topic.

Fast food workers across California joined the January 23, 2025 subcommittee meeting. When we heard employers weighing in to oppose discussion of the annual raise many of us sought to participate in public comment. We were deeply disappointed when we had to wait hours to speak because of challenges involving the translation services, especially when we don't have the luxury of time to be on the call.

In the end, only a handful of us made it through and were selected to speak, while the others were never to be called upon, or had to leave ahead of time to go to work and support our families. We were frustrated to hear employers speak more than once, while we were left waiting - even though our hands were properly raised. We do not believe that this was an intentional slight by the Chair or staff, but a result of how participation was poorly designed for non-English speakers. We have asked our union to work with Council staff as well as you all to resolve the underlying process issues.

To be clear, we did not all intend to give testimony during the meeting, because the purpose of regular Council meetings and subcommittee meetings is to get the business of the Council done. You will hear from many more of us during the two-day hearing; and certainly you have received many communications from us to inform your work. But it is crucial that the Council agendize the issues it is tasked with; discuss them; and work on answers together.

We're concerned that the industry appears to be delaying the Council's meetings to prevent the Council from fulfilling its legislative mandate. Employers and their representatives on the Council are making a detailed and forceful case that there should not be an annual raise for workers, but the issue is not even on the agenda yet. The purpose of the subcommittee meeting was only to recommend to the Chair items for placement on the next meeting agenda for discussion. We agree with employers that the annual raise is a critical issue that is ready for immediate discussion - but that is a reason to put the issue on the agenda; not to try to avoid the topic under the guise of having the discussion in depth without placing it on the agenda.


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Next steps:

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Sincerely,
California Fast Food Workers Union Steering Committee



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FAST FOOD COUNCIL PRIORITY #1

Protect Our Pay

Fast food workers lack the wage increases we need to keep pace with increases in the cost of living, a practice in place for all other minimum wage policies across California.²⁴ In fact, all 40 city and county minimum wage policies in California identified by UC Berkeley researchers have a mechanism for wage increases tied to increases in the cost of living. Although Government data show that fast food workers remain the second-largest group of low-wage workers in California, fast food workers lack the basic wage increases needed to live.²⁵

A \$20 Minimum Wage: Effects on Wages, Employment and Prices*

DENIS SOSINSKIY
University of California, Berkeley

MICHAEL REICH
University of California, Berkeley

September 2025

On April 1, 2024, California implemented a \$20 hourly wage floor for workers in large chains in fast-food restaurants and snack and non-alcoholic beverage bars. The new standard, which corresponds to 69 percent of the state's median full-time wage, surpasses all prior benchmarks in minimum wage policies and research. Using survey and administrative data on wages and employment, pay data from Glassdoor, prices we scraped from over 2,000 restaurants in California and control states, and DiD and DDD event study methods, we find that the policy increased average weekly wages for covered fast food workers by 10 to 11 percent and did not reduce employment. Compared to controls, prices increased by 2.1 percent two quarters after the policy, equivalent to 8 cents for a \$4 item. Employers passed about 63 percent of the higher wage costs to consumers as higher prices, consistent with a monopsony model.

*We are grateful to the Institute for Research on Labor and Employment at UC Berkeley for research support, to Sahali Kollu, Alyssa Nguyen and Nataraja Wong for research assistance and Ana Fox-Holness for careful editing. David Card, Anandжит Dube, Patrick Kline and Aaron Sofer and participants at the AEA 2025 meetings, the IRL seminar and the Berkeley Labor Seminar provided excellent suggestions. We thank Daniel Zhao and Ara Khazarian for assistance with Glassdoor and Square data.

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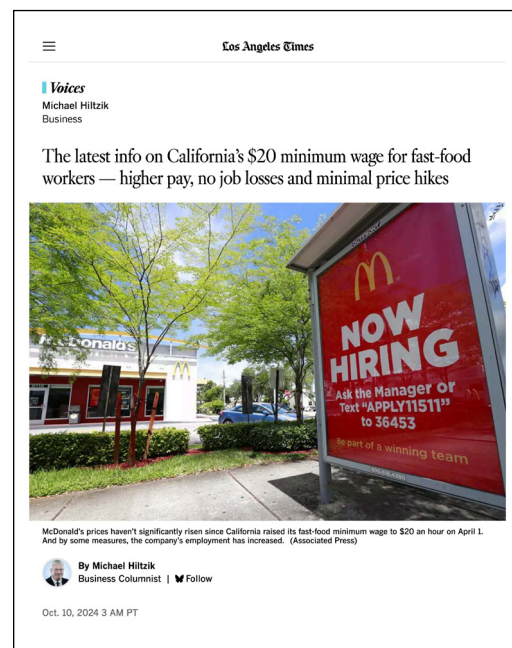
New Research

Despite dire predictions by fast food industry lobbyists and the business press, the fast food minimum wage increase on April 1, 2024 did not cause burger prices to skyrocket. **Researchers at UC Berkeley found that eight months after the wage increase went into effect, the price increase on a \$4 item attributable to the minimum wage increase was just 8¢, while weekly wages for California fast food workers increased by 10-11%, without a reduction in employment.**²⁶

For this study, Denis Sosinskiy and Michael Reich, leading experts on the study of the impact of minimum wage policies, analyzed survey and administrative data on wages and employment, pay data from Glassdoor and prices scraped from over 2,000 restaurants in California and control states. **This research should allay any fears that annual cost of living adjustments would meaningfully impact consumers.**

Los Angeles Times business columnist Michael Hiltzik took the fast food industry lobby to task for their early false claims that the fast food minimum wage was causing job losses. In the first of two deeply-researched columns about the impact of the 2024 fast food minimum wage, published June 12, 2024, Hiltzik excoriated the Wall Street Journal, the Hoover Institution and the fast food industry lobbyists who quote them for “flagrant misrepresentation of government employment figures.”²⁷

Stating bluntly, “Its numbers are fake,” Hiltzik countered with figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Federal Reserve and academic experts studying minimum wage policies, showing that fast food employment increased during both the periods immediately before and after the minimum wage increase.²⁸



Voices
 Michael Hiltzik
 Business

The fast-food industry claims the California minimum wage law is costing jobs. Its numbers are fake



Surrounded by fast-food workers in September, Gov. Gavin Newsom signs the bill raising the minimum wage in the industry to \$20 an hour from \$16. (Damian Dovarganes / Associated Press)

In his second column, published October 10, 2024, Hiltzik continued his tour de force, summing up new scholarly research that flies in the face of false industry claims: “Two new analyses of the actual wage and price impacts of the \$20-per-hour minimum have appeared this month. They employ slightly different statistics, but their conclusions are the same: **There have been no job losses in fast food resulting from the increase. By some measures, employment has increased.**”²⁹

Research has continued to validate the conclusion that the \$20 fast food minimum wage increased worker wages without significant employment impacts. Researchers Naser Hamdi and David Sovich, using high-quality payroll data, found that a decline in employee turnover outpaced the decline in hiring, causing total fast-food employment to rise at the same time worker wages increased 10-11%.³⁰ The researchers also found that, along with minimum wage earners, fast food workers earning above the minimum wage experienced wage increases, presumably maintaining differentials among classifications, and that there were no wage or employment spillovers on firms outside the fast food industry.

The Wage and Employment Effects of California’s Fast-Food Minimum Wage

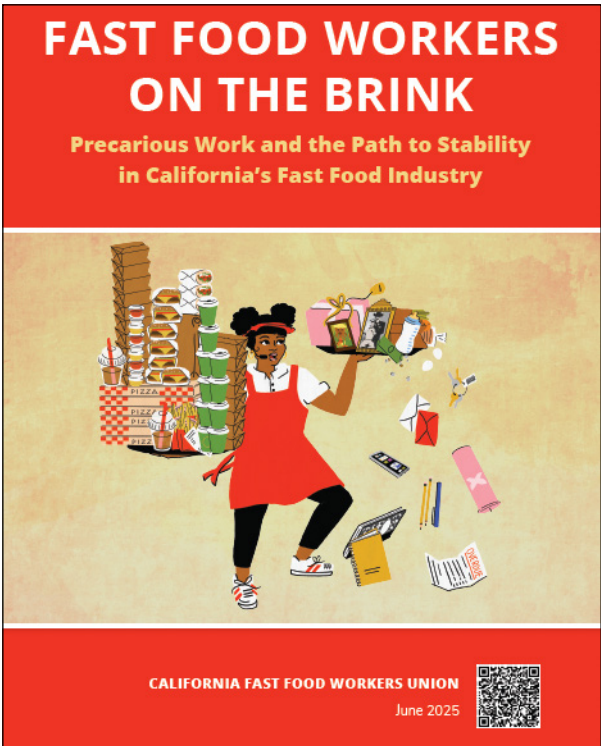
Naser Hamdi and David Sovich*

April 2025

Abstract

In April 2024, California raised the minimum wage for fast-food workers to \$20 an hour. We use high-quality payroll data to study the wage and employment effects of this policy and document four main results. First, the policy led to significantly lower turnover in the fast-food sector. Second, wages increased not only for fast-food workers earning below \$20, but also for higher-paid workers. Third, although hiring declined following the minimum wage increase, it was outpaced by the decline in turnover, causing total fast-food employment to rise. Fourth, there were no wage or employment spillovers on firms outside the fast-food sector.

*Hamdi is at Equifax (nhamdi@gmail.com). Sovich is at University of Kentucky, Gatton College of Business and Economics (davidsovich@uky.edu). This paper represents the views of the authors and not Equifax Inc.



A new survey of over 300 California fast food workers, however, found that despite the fast food minimum wage increase, a vast majority of respondents reported persistent struggles making it through the month.³¹

A full 86% of workers surveyed said they are worried about being able to pay next month's rent, and 76% said that during the past year they had to choose between paying rent or paying for basic needs such as food, medicine and bills.

Recommendations for the Fast Food Council

The Fast Food Council can take action now to address these problems by adjusting the fast food minimum wage for inflation, and by supporting pilot Know Your Rights training efforts in the City of Los Angeles and Santa Clara County, so that we know our rights and what to do about wage theft and other violations that impact our incomes.

FAST FOOD COUNCIL PRIORITY #2

Fair Scheduling Protections

Fast food workers across California report that abusive and often-retaliatory schedule changes create chaos for childcare and transportation arrangements, make it hard to maintain second and third jobs, and lead to big changes in income from week to week that stress family budgets, leaving many workers and their families on the brink of homelessness.

New Research

New research from the Shift Project of the Harvard Kennedy School and UC Berkeley Malcolm Weiner Center for Social Policy published January 2026 confirms what fast food workers have been reporting: **fast food jobs are marked by insufficient and volatile hours, and that hours swing wildly from week to week, resulting in income volatility and financial strain, with most workers – nearly 80% – struggling to cover expenses in a typical month.**³²

Significantly, in contrast to the schedule instability characterizing fast food work in California, researchers found that retail workers covered by a new policy, the Retail Fair Workweek Ordinance (FWWO) in the City of Los Angeles, experienced improved schedule quality, including reduced short notice, cancelled shifts, on-call work, clopenings and overall schedule instability. Fast food workers, who are not covered by the FWWO, did not experience these improvements. Researchers conclude that policymakers should extend Fair Work Week protections to fast food workers in order to directly address one of the most destabilizing features of fast food jobs.

Findings from worker survey questions specific to the issue of schedule instability published in “Fast Food Workers on the Brink” show an overwhelming majority report experiencing unstable schedules and insufficient work hours, and worrying about schedule changes, cuts to their work hours, and the possibility of losing their jobs without warning or for no good reason.³³



KEY FINDINGS

ECONOMIC INSECURITY

- 86%** of fast food workers surveyed say they are worried about being able to pay next month's rent.
- 76%** say that during the past year they have had to choose between paying their rent or paying for basic needs such as food, medicine and bills.
- 87%** say that they need to work more hours to be able to pay basic expenses, such as rent, food, bills and gas.

UNPREDICTABLE SCHEDULES

- 98%** of fast food workers surveyed say that if they had a sudden schedule change or cut in hours that it would cause them problems paying for rent, healthcare or other basic needs.
- 90%** say they worry that their schedule could change for no good reason or without warning.
- 82%** say that they worry every week about whether they'll be scheduled for enough hours, because their schedule constantly changes.
- 64%** say that a sudden schedule change would cause them problems with childcare or with their second job.
- 79%** say they want to work more hours at their fast food jobs but can't get scheduled for them.

JOB INSTABILITY

- 71%** of fast food workers surveyed say that their employers have hired new workers without offering the hours to workers who already work at the store and want more hours.
- 92%** of fast food workers surveyed say they worry they could lose their job for no good reason or without warning.

In a new survey, the vast majority of California fast food workers reported experiencing unstable schedules and insufficient work hours, and worrying about schedule changes, cuts to their work hours, and the possibility of losing their jobs without warning or for no good reason. Source: California Fast Food Workers Survey published in "Fast Food Workers on the Brink," California Fast Food Workers Union, June 2025.

A full 87% of fast food workers surveyed said they need more work hours to be able to pay basic expenses, such as rent, food, bills and gas. Eight-two percent said they worry every week about whether they'll be scheduled for enough hours, because their schedule constantly changes. Seventy-nine percent said they want to work more hours at their fast food jobs but can't get scheduled for them. And 98% said that if they had a sudden schedule change or cut in hours, that it would cause them problems paying for rent, healthcare or other basic needs. Key recommendations in the report include addressing these problems with Fair Scheduling and Opportunity to Work policies.

Worker Voices

Recent complaints filed by fast food workers show the devastating impact of unpredictable and unstable schedules on fast food workers and our families. Workers at fast food stores in San Jose describe that management does not schedule them for enough work hours to make ends meet, while at the same time hiring new workers without offering the hours to existing workers.

After seven years working at Taco Bell, management cut Gilberta's schedule from 37 hours per week down to just 14 hours.³⁴ **Gilberta fell behind on rent and only has housing because her landlord has been kind enough to let her and her children stay.** She is barely able to afford to feed her children beans every day.

FAST FOOD - CITY OF SAN JOSE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK VIOLATIONS - RESPONSE REQUESTED

City of San Jose, Office of Equality Assurance
200 East Santa Clara Street, Fifth Floor, San Jose CA 95113, Tel: 418 535-8430
Via email: opportunitytowork@sanioseca.gov

May 1, 2025

RE: El Pollo Loco, 2131 Monterey Rd San Jose, CA 95125

Employer: Roland Spongberg, CEO; Paul Tanner, CFO; Jay Spongberg VP and COO; WKS Restaurant Corporation; 5856 Corporate Ave Ste 200 Cypress, CA 90630

We are Bosco Bermúdez, Auxiliadora Lopez, and Alejandra Hernandez Lopez and we work at the El Pollo Loco at 2131 Monterey Rd in San Jose. We are writing this Opportunity to Work Complaint because management at this El Pollo Loco started cutting our hours in March 2024 while hiring several new workers at our store, without offering the hours to us first, in violation of San Jose's Opportunity to Work Ordinance, which mandates that hours be offered to all existing qualified workers using a transparent and non-discriminatory process, before hiring new workers.

When a new manager began working at this store in March 2024, we were told that our schedules would stay the same, but we quickly found out that that was not true and soon many of us had our hours illegally cut from our schedules. For example, Auxiliadora's hours were cut from 35 hrs/week to just 15 hrs/wk, Bosco's hours were cut from 40 hrs/wk to 34 hrs/wk, and Alejandra's hours were cut from 36 hrs/wk to 25 hrs/wk. At the same time as our schedules were cut, management hired several new workers and gave them full time schedules, without ever offering those hours to us, as mandated by the San Jose Opportunity to Work Ordinance. **Fast food stores can change managers frequently, it is not right to have our lives turned upside down with schedule changes and cuts just because there is a new manager. We would have gladly accepted the hours given to the new hires, but we never got the chance.**

We need our regular work hours restored and stable schedules to support ourselves and our families.

- **Bosco thought that his paycheck would increase after the fast food minimum wage went up to \$20/hr in April 2024, but instead, management cut his hours, leaving him with less income than before the raise and making it nearly impossible to support his family, since his wife cannot work because she takes care of their daughter who has special needs.** He has a second job that keeps his family afloat, but without it he would not be able to keep up with rent and bills, which continue to go up.
- **Auxiliadora had to get a second job because of these illegal schedule cuts, and has to rely on her brother for help on rent.**

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FAST FOOD - CITY OF SAN JOSE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK VIOLATIONS - RESPONSE REQUESTED

City of San Jose Office of Equality Assurance
200 East Santa Clara Street, Fifth Floor, San Jose CA 95113, Tel: 418 535-8430
Via email: opportunitytowork@sanioseca.gov

January 31, 2025

RE: Taco Bell, 3690 Stevens Creek Blvd, San Jose CA 95117

Employer: Rakesh Kumar, CEO, CFO, Secretary, Director, Kumar Restaurant Group Inc
1116 Chess Drive, Foster City CA 94404

We are Gilberta Acevedo, Patricia Gaudron, and Carmen Nevares, and we work at the Taco Bell at 3690 Stevens Creek in San Jose. We are writing this Opportunity to Work Complaint because **management at this Taco Bell has been cutting our hours while hiring at least 5 new workers to our store, without offering the hours to us first, in violation of San Jose's Opportunity to Work Ordinance which mandates that hours be offered to all existing qualified workers using a transparent and non-discriminatory process, before hiring new workers.**

Starting around September, 2024, management began cutting existing workers' schedules and saying there were too many people working at the store. At the same time, management began bringing in new workers to our store and giving them our hours. For example, Gilberta – who has worked at this Taco Bell store for over 7 years – had a big schedule cut, from typically being scheduled around 37 hours per week down to just 14 hours per week, while management has hired several new workers and given them full-time schedules. **This illegal schedule cut put Gilberta and her family on the verge of homelessness, she is behind on rent and only has housing because her landlord has been kind enough to let her and her children stay, and she is barely able to afford to feed her children beans everyday.**

Both Patricia and Carmen have also had illegal schedule cuts. In December 2024, Patricia had a day cut from the schedule she and the store manager had agreed on, and in January 2025 Carmen had an hour cut from her regular Friday schedule. The store manager brought in 2 new workers in January 2025, and did not offer the hours to Gilberta, Patricia or Carmen.

We have told management that we need more hours. When Gilberta asked the store manager if she could have her Saturday shifts back, the store manager told Gilberta there were already too many workers on the schedule, and they couldn't take away hours from other workers to give them to Gilberta, even though their hours were originally taken from Gilberta. Carmen also asked the store manager why her schedule was being cut, and was told that there were too many workers.

Sometimes management does offer additional hours to established, qualified workers, but not in a transparent and non-discriminatory manner, as required by the Opportunity to Work Ordinance; and

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At an El Pollo Loco in San Jose, Bosco, Auxiliadora and Alejandra reported that since a new manager came and changed the schedule, they do not get enough work hours.³⁵ At the same time, management hired new workers.

Bosco thought that his paycheck would increase after the fast food minimum wage went up to \$20 per hour in April 2024, but instead, management cut his hours, leaving him with less income than before the raise and making it nearly impossible to support his family, since his wife cannot work because she takes care of their daughter who has special needs. He has a second job that keeps his family afloat, but without it he would not be able to keep up with rent and bills, which continue to go up. Auxiliadora had to get a second job and rely on her brother for help with the rent. Alejandra was left with barely enough income to pay for the room she rents.

FAST FOOD - CITY OF SAN JOSE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK VIOLATIONS - REPEATED VIOLATIONS - 2ND COMPLAINT - RESPONSE REQUESTED

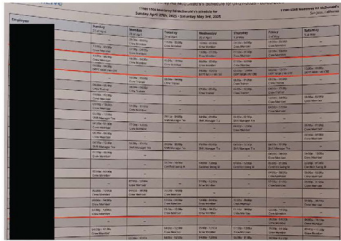
City of San Jose, Office of Equality Assurance
200 East Santa Clara Street, Fifth Floor, San Jose CA 95113, Tel: 418 535-8430
Via email: opportunitytowork@sanjoseca.gov

May 21, 2025

**RE: REPEAT VIOLATION - 2ND COMPLAINT
McDonald's, 5508 Monterey Rd, San Jose 95138**

Employer: Henley Restaurants Inc; James Henley, CEO; Stacey Henley, Secretary, CFO;
6830 Via Del Oro Ste 101, San Jose 95119

We are Refugio Gonzalez and Maria Ramirez and we work at the McDonald's at 5508 Monterey Rd in San Jose. We are writing this **Second Complaint** to the Office of Equality Assurance (OEA) because **management at this McDonald's is continuing to violate the Opportunity to Work Ordinance, hiring at least 3 new workers since the conclusion of the OEA's first investigation on 9/26/2024, without offering additional hours to us and our coworkers first. We are scheduled for just 20-25 hours per week, leaving us reliant on free food from food pantries because we don't have enough work hours to afford to feed our families.** Under the Opportunity to Work Ordinance, our employer is required to offer additional work hours to existing, qualified workers before hiring new workers, a law put in place to protect workers like us, who need to work full-time work schedules to support our families.

A screenshot of a timekeeping record from McDonald's. The table has columns for employee names, dates, and hours worked. It shows a grid of data for several employees over a period of time. The text below the table explains that this schedule for the week of 4/27/2025 shows 3 new workers were hired in the last four months without offering additional hours to existing employees first, in violation of the Opportunity to Work Ordinance.

This schedule for the week of 4/27/2025 shows 3 new workers were hired in the last four months without offering additional hours to existing employees first, in violation of the Opportunity to Work Ordinance. Management of this McDonald's was previously found in violation of the Opportunity to Work Ordinance on 9/26/2024.

In response to the first Complaint in 2024, the OEA investigated our employer, found numerous violations, and made recommendations for compliance. The OEA's analysis of timekeeping records provided by McDonald's showed that during the 13-month period examined: (1) McDonald's had newer employees working ten (10) hours or less when those hours could have been offered to existing employees bringing them full time or near full time employment status; and (2) 10 new employees were hired, and newly hired employees were often given

Management at a McDonald's in San Jose did not schedule Refugio and Maria for enough hours to get by, leaving them reliant on free food from food pantries.

An investigation by the City of San Jose's Office of Equality Assurance found that management at this McDonald's had newer employees working ten hours or less when those hours could have been offered to existing employees, bringing them to full time or near full time employment status.³⁶

Recommendations for the Fast Food Council

The Fast Food Council is empowered to set minimum fair scheduling standards in California to increase scheduling stability and protect workers from arbitrary and often-retaliatory schedule changes that exacerbate poverty and housing insecurity.

FAST FOOD COUNCIL PRIORITY #3

Ownership Change/Closure Protections

Fast food franchises are frequently bought and sold, transferred or closed. The way fast food companies treat us in these situations can help us thrive, or can disrupt the carefully-constructed arrangements we have for childcare, school, transportation and second jobs, and even push us and our families over the brink into homelessness.

FAST FOOD - CITY OF SAN JOSE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK VIOLATIONS - RESPONSE REQUESTED

City of San Jose Office of Equality Assurance
200 East Santa Clara Street, Fifth Floor
San Jose CA 95113
Tel: 418 535-8430

Via email: opportunitytowork@sanjoseca.gov

September 16, 2024

RE: Jack in the Box, 611 E Capitol Expy, San Jose CA 95111

Owner: LJ & MW Enterprises Inc; Larry Jones, CEO, CFO, Agent; Millie Want, Secretary
25399 Old Fairview Ave, Hayward CA 94542

My name is Santos Sandoval and I have worked at the Jack in the Box at 611 E Capitol Expy in San Jose for 5 years and am 61 years old. I am filing this Opportunity to Work Complaint because management at this Jack in the Box has violated the San Jose Opportunity to Work Ordinance by cutting my schedule from 5 days per week (25 hours per week) down to 9.5 hours per week, a loss of around 15 hours of work per week, while hiring 2 new workers whose combined schedules add up to about 37 hours of work per week, without offering those hours to me or my coworkers first, as required by the Ordinance.

In April management cut my schedule from 5 shifts a week down to 4 shifts, and then in June the manager Alison told me my schedule was cut again, they took away the cleaning and maintenance work hours that I used to have, and left me with just 9.5 hours per week of work unloading deliveries. The cleaning work that I used to do did not disappear, the store still has to be cleaned. When they hired the new workers, Alison knew that I wanted more hours because I had asked her for more hours and I was upset when she told me that my schedule was cut. I later heard that Alison told my coworker that management wanted to get rid of me because I was too old, and that's why they cut my schedule down to two days. Alison also told my coworker that she wanted to get rid of the old workers and only hire young workers, which is exactly what happened.

I am 61, but I work just as hard as my younger coworkers, and have done the job for 5 years. At no point has anyone told me that the work I was doing was not good enough or that I was not doing my job properly. Several of my coworkers are also facing age discrimination, including management making fun and firing older workers. We didn't know there was anything we could do about management making fun of older workers, cutting our schedules and firing us because of our age until we talked with the CA Fast Food Workers Union and learned about our rights under the Opportunity to Work Ordinance and anti-discrimination laws, and how to uphold them.

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Worker Voices

Recent complaints filed by fast food workers describe the hardships of workers experiencing fast food franchise ownership changes and closures.

At age 61, Santos's schedule at Jack in the Box was cut from five shifts a week down to just 9.5 hours per week.³⁷ The cleaning and maintenance work he had been doing for five years was taken away, and he was left with just unloading deliveries. His coworker told him that management cut Santos's hours because he is old, and that they wanted to get rid of the older workers and hire younger workers.

Santos filed a discrimination case with the California Civil Rights Department and achieved a settlement getting his hours back. Soon after, however, the franchise was sold and the original owners did not allow Santos to transfer to another Jack in the Box stores that they own. At the same time, the new franchise owners did not respect the settlement agreement, leaving Santos without a job. Santos also filed an Opportunity to Work complaint with the City to San Jose, because such laws can provide protection from arbitrary, discriminatory and often-retaliatory schedule changes.³⁸

FAST FOOD - CITY OF SAN JOSE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK VIOLATIONS - RESPONSE REQUESTED

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Workers at a McDonald's in Oakland suffered the impacts of two separate ownership changes in just two years, first when the franchise was sold in 2023 and then when it was closed in 2025.³⁹ In 2023, workers lost their sick pay from one day to the next, and the new owner did not take responsibility for sick pay they were owed, including a worker who was owed 27 hours of sick pay from when he missed work due to foot surgery. Then just before Thanksgiving in 2025, the new owners gave workers just 10 days' notice that the store was closing, with no opportunity to transfer to another McDonald's, and little time to find a new job.

Martha, who has worked cleaning and maintaining McDonald's stores under different franchise owners for 30 years, was left to depend on her daughters, one of whom was also unemployed, and the other a recent cancer survivor.

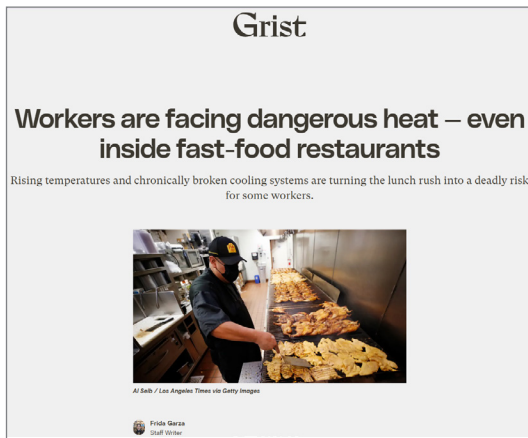
Recommendations for the Fast Food Council

The Fast Food Council is empowered to put minimum standards in place to protect us from losing our jobs, and what we have earned, such as paid sick leave, wages and anything else we are owed, when a store is sold, transferred or closed, so that store ownership changes and closings can happen on good terms, without needlessly destabilizing our lives.

In the event of store closures, fast food franchisees and corporate parents should be required to provide ample advanced notice and to support workers with a fair transfer process, and franchisees should be required to provide a guarantee from the franchisor or post a bond to ensure workers receive their final pay as well as anything else they are owed.

FAST FOOD COUNCIL PRIORITY #4

Investigate Pervasive Abuses



Source: Grist, August 29, 2025.

The issues described in these complaints fall generally into five main categories: (1) Food Safety and Worker Health & Safety Hazards, (2) Wage Theft, (3) Harassment & Discrimination, (4) Employer Retaliation, and (5) Immigration Enforcement Threats by Employers.

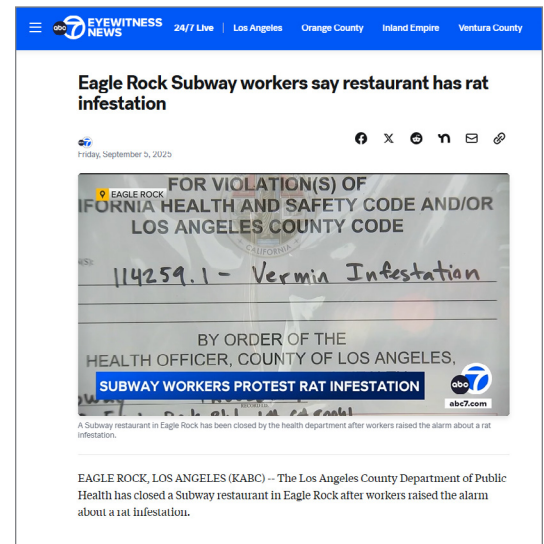
Food Safety and Worker Health & Safety Hazards: Fast food workers report being told by management to serve unsafe food to customers, including moldy, rotten and undercooked foods, and food contaminated by rats and roaches. The complaints also document kitchens flooding with sewer drain water coming up from the floor and rain leaking down into food prep areas, serious burns and injuries, and being forced to work sick with potentially contagious symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhea, flu and Covid. Equipment failures cause additional hazards, including gas leaks from broken grills, triple-digit heat when the AC breaks, and excessive smoke when the vent fans over grills and fryers fail. Workers also describe facing life-threatening violence, including attacks with guns, knives and chairs, and a store that uses a spoon in place of a lock in the drive-thru.

One throughline in these complaints is poor management response to hazards - with management forcing workers to serve contaminated food; failing to provide needed first aid and medical care, including sending a worker with a severe head injury to drive himself home, and telling workers with serious burns to put ice on their wounds; and failing to fix broken equipment and facilities. Another throughline is that workers often lack required training on what to do about hazards, with workers reporting management completing online trainings under workers names. Workers report risking their jobs to report hazards, and being ignored when they do make such reports.

California AB-1228 established the Fast Food Council to set minimum industry standards to address workers' most pressing problems. Since then, pervasive abuses have continued in this low-wage, high-violation industry.⁴⁰

Worker Voices

Since the commencement of the Fast Food Council, fast food workers from across California have filed over 100 new complaints with state and local regulators reporting that ongoing hazards and abuses go unaddressed by employers.⁴¹



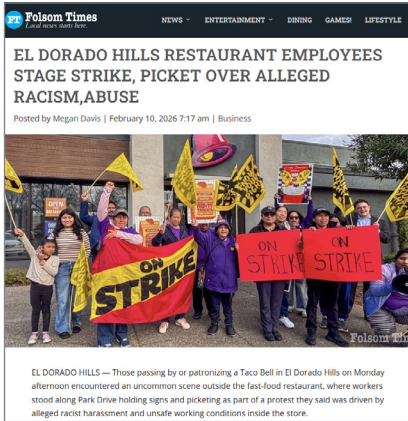
Source: ABC 7, Los Angeles, September 5, 2025.



Source: CALÓ News, Nov 7, 2024.

Harassment and Discrimination: Pregnant workers report being denied basic accommodations, for heavy lifting and breaks to go to the restroom, as well as being denied rights to return to work after maternity leave. Workers of Mexican heritage describe being subjected to relentless slurs. Workers suffering illness and injury describe employers not allowing them to return to their jobs and regular schedules upon recovery, including in cases of workers injured on the job, and that employers refuse necessary accommodations, leaving workers without income and dependent on food banks to feed their families. Workers in their 50s describe humiliation, schedule cuts and firings on the basis of age.

Wage Theft: In recent complaints, fast food workers report employers frequently deny paid sick leave, including an employer denying a worker’s use of her available paid sick leave when she missed one day of work to bury her husband, who had recently passed away. Employers systematically change timekeeping records to cheat workers out of pay and breaks, and use a variety of overtime avoidance schemes to avoid paying overtime rates of pay. Bounced checks cause workers to have their bank accounts closed and cause late fees, with a worker in Los Angeles describing her eviction after her employer failed to pay her for several weeks.



Source: Folsom Times, February 10, 2026.



Source: The Guardian, Feb 27, 2026.

Employer Retaliation: Workers experience schedule cuts and firings for calling in sick and asking for sick pay, including workers missing work to care for family members with cancer. Workers also experience schedule cuts and firing for reporting health and safety hazards to management and filing complaints with Cal/OSHA, including reports of death threats and gun violence.

Immigration Enforcement Threats by Employers: Workers asking questions about wage theft – including off-the-clock work, forgery of employee timesheets, and manipulation of timekeeping records – report being threatened with immigration enforcement if workers file complaints.

Workers asking about discriminatory schedule cuts are also threatened with immigration enforcement.

Recommendations for the Fast Food Council

As the following pages show, new research on the California fast food industry and new complaints filed by fast food workers with state and local regulators since the establishment of the Fast Food Council document that hazards and abuses remain widespread in the California fast food industry.

The Fast Food Council is empowered to investigate these hazards and abuses to inform the Council on working conditions, and best practices for addressing the most pressing problems experienced by workers.

Health & Safety

Fast food workers across California report health and safety hazards, including problems that affect both worker safety and consumer health, such as infestations by rats and roaches, flooding in kitchen and food prep areas caused by water flowing up from sewer drains and down through leaks in the roof, and exposure to excessive smoke from dirty fryer oil.

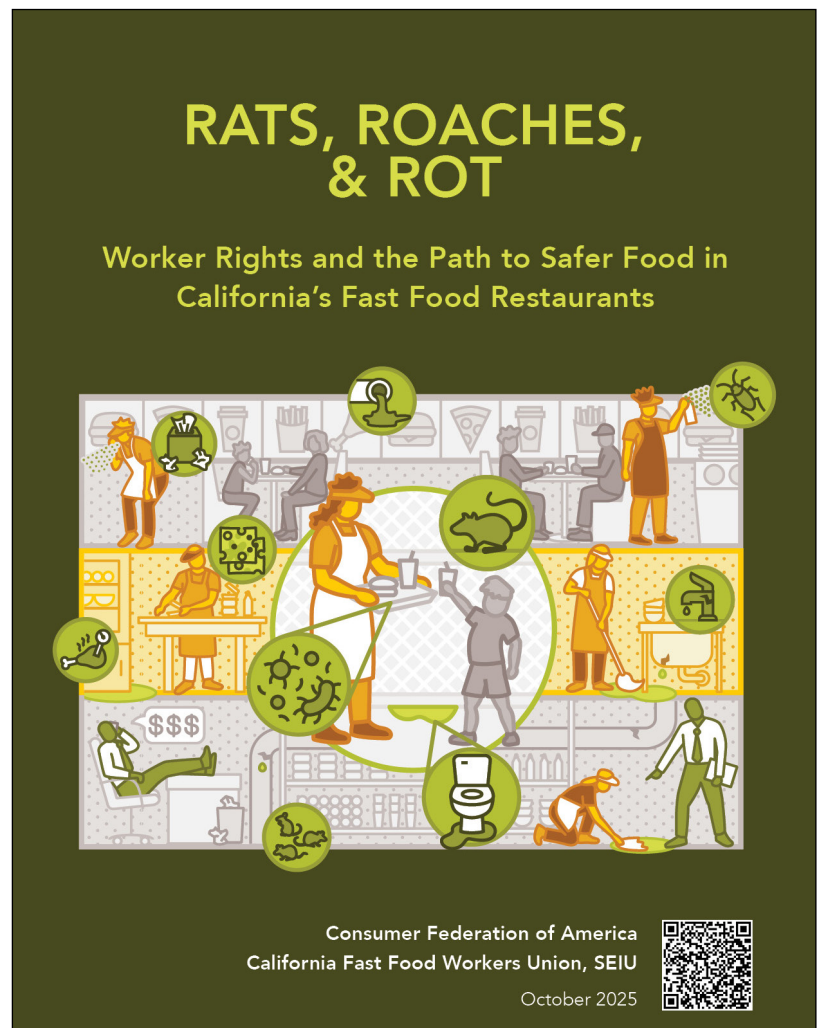
Workers also report not being allowed to take sick days and not being allowed to leave the store when they are sick, including being forced to work with potentially contagious illnesses and symptoms such as vomiting and diarrhea, flu and Covid. Many fast food workers fear employer retaliation if they report health or food safety hazards, including contaminated, rotten, expired or moldy food being served to customers, and experience employer retaliation when they do report hazards to management or file complaints with regulators.

Excessive heat and workplace violence are among the most frequent and life-threatening hazards experienced by fast food workers. Fast food workers in California are protected by health and safety regulations, including new requirements from July 2024 to protect workers from indoor heat illness and workplace violence. Many fast food workers, however, do not know about these laws or what to do if management ignores hazards.

New Research

A review of county health inspection records and reports of county health department-ordered restaurant closures from 2022 to 2025 in California confirms that major violations of food safety laws remain widespread in fast food restaurants across major brands and in all parts of the state.⁴² The review analyzed available records citing major violations and restaurant closures due to failed health inspections at restaurants in twenty of the largest franchised food brands operating in the state's twelve largest counties. These results were published in a new report by the Consumer Federation of America and the California Fast Food Workers Union published in October 2025 titled, "Rats, Roaches & Rot: Worker Rights and the Path to Safer Food in California's Fast Food Restaurants."

"Rats, Roaches & Rot" also features the results of a new survey of over 300 California fast food workers working throughout the state and across all major brands who were queried about their experiences with food safety hazards.



Nearly half (47%) reported that they had seen at least one serious food safety problem at their fast food jobs in the past year alone, including problems related to rats, mice, roaches, sewer flooding, expired rotten or moldy food served to customers, lack of access to toilets, improper procedures related to handwashing, food storage temperature or cross-contamination. Twenty-nine percent of respondents said they have seen sewage or sewer water flooding while the store was open and preparing or serving food, and 24% said workers lacked access to a working toilet, lacked access to warm water for handwashing, or were not given enough time to wash their hands properly.⁴³

Marc Schenker, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of the Departments of Public Health Sciences and Medicine at UC Davis, summarized what is at stake in his Foreword to the report: “We know that restaurants are top venues for foodborne illness outbreaks, and that food worker illness, poor food handling and hygiene practices, and problems with cross contamination are among the key contributing factors to these outbreaks. In this groundbreaking report, we learn that serious food safety problems that pose risks to consumers, workers and the general public are widespread in California’s fast food restaurants.”⁴⁴



Published to mark the one-year anniversary of the implementation of the California Indoor Heat Illness Prevention Standard, a new report shows California fast food workers continue to experience serious and life-threatening heat illness on the job.

In a survey of over 300 fast food workers from across California about heat illness during the one year period after the new law went to effect, 58% reported experiencing excessive heat on the job, with **half reporting experiencing heat illness symptoms in the previous year, including: headache, fatigue, dizziness, confusion, muscle pain and spasms, elevated heart rate, heavy sweating, hot dry skin, nausea, vomiting and fainting.** The report, titled “Cool it! Hazardous Heat, Fast Food & the Path to a Safer Workplace,” was authored by Worksafe and the California Fast Food Workers Union.

Among workers who reported that it was too hot at their fast food jobs, 79% reported problems with the AC, with 55% of those reporting management did not fix the AC⁴⁵ in a

timely manner, and 50% reporting management said it was too expensive to permanently fix the AC. Forty-six percent reported management did not implement any of the basic requirements of the Indoor Heat Illness Prevention Standard to prevent heat illness during high heat, such as encouraging workers to drink water and providing free water and the time and a place to drink it. Perhaps most disturbing, **only 13% of workers who reported needing urgent medical care for heat illness said management provided it.**

FOOD SAFETY

Rotting food, rats and roaches are recurring topics of recent worker complaints to Cal/OSHA and local public health authorities, with workers describing unsafe food being served to customers, and lack of management action to protect workers and customers from rotten and contaminated food.

In a Cal/OSHA complaint filed about a rat infestation at a McDonald's in Oakland, Angelica and Oscar described: "We see rats in the kitchen every day. We see rats at the grill where we make the hamburgers, nibbling on pieces of bacon or on hamburgers that are ready to be sent to the customers, and we see rat droppings next to the bags of chicken nuggets, Big Macs, and the papers we wrap around cheeseburgers. We don't send the food to customers if we see a rat has taken a bite out of it, but we have to work so fast that sometimes we notice too late that we have been serving from bags of bread with rat bites."⁴⁶ The workers added: "When management saw a worker take a picture of a rat in the kitchen on February 4, 2024, they told us if we were caught taking pictures or videos we would get a warning or be fired, and soon after they put up a sign saying 'No Video No Photos No Recording.'"


SFGATE

FOOD

'We see rats ... every day': Bay Area McDonald's closes due to infestation

By **Susana Guerrero**, Senior News Reporter
May 7, 2024

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McDonald's, at 1330 Jackson St. in Oakland, temporarily closed due to a rat infestation.
Google Street View

Source: SF Gate, May 7, 2024.

In complaints filed with Cal/OSHA and the Los Angeles County Health Department in October 2024, workers at a Subway in Eagle Rock documented that the store was overrun with rodents, and that when they showed the store owner that the rodents had bitten into bags of sauces, she told them to just put tape over the holes and serve the sauces to customers.⁴⁷ Workers at the store filed more complaints in September 2025 when the rodent population surged again, eating bread and sauces and leaving droppings in boxes of packaging and sweeteners, and again management failed to respond properly, instead instructing workers to wipe off contaminated food and serve it to customers.⁴⁸

Elsa and Estela, workers at a Jack in the Box in Roseville, reported that bread and other food potentially contaminated by rats was being served to customers: “Management instructs us, ‘If it looks good, use it,’ and they do not allow us to throw away bags or boxes of food that rats have bitten into or entered.”⁴⁹

In February 2026, Isabela and Guadalupe reported to Cal/OSHA and the El Dorado County Environmental Health Department about moldy nuggets, rotten tomatoes and chips contaminated by roaches being served to customers at the Taco Bell where they work in El Dorado Hills, under a policy forbidding workers from throwing away food.⁵⁰ After Isabel asked the store manager not to serve undercooked eggs, she learned from a co-worker that he gave her a warning.



Source: KTLA 5, September 5, 2025

El Pollo Loco workers in Oakland file multiple health & safety complaints

In April 2024, Erica and Carmen learned about their right to a safe work environment, and filed a complaint with Cal/OSHA reporting kitchen fires and sewer flooding.⁵¹

FAST FOOD - WORKER HEALTH AND SAFETY - FLOODING - ELECTROCUTION HAZARD - SEWAGE EXPOSURE - BROKEN APPLIANCES (ICE MACHINE, TORTILLA WARMER) - LACK OF PPE - IMMINENT HAZARD - RESPONSE REQUESTED

CalOSHA

Wendy Hogle-Lui, Oakland District Manager

1515 Clay Street, Suite 1303, Oakland, CA 94612, Tel: (510) 622-2916; Fax: (510) 622-2908

Via email: DOSHOAK@dir.ca.gov

April 26, 2024

RE: El Pollo Loco, 2506 International Blvd. Oakland, CA 94601

Employer: Coastal Valley Enterprises, Joseph N. Rubin, CEO and CFO, Manuel Perales, Secretary
400 Santa Clara Street, Ste 206, Vallejo CA 94590

We are Erica Cruz and Carmen Ponce, and we work at the El Pollo Loco at 2506 International Blvd in Oakland. We are filing this complaint because management has failed to protect us from the hazards of fire, flooding, electrocution, and exposure to sewer water and sewage system water. We feel like we risk our lives everyday going to work, and we are angry and scared that we have to work in an unsafe environment with slippery floors and the possibility of being electrocuted.



- **Fire:** 1/25/23 the fryer caught on fire. Erica stopped a coworker from throwing water on the fire, which could have spread this grease fire.

- **Kitchen flooding:** The ice machine in the kitchen has caused flooding more than 20 times in the past 2 years, most recently 4/13/24; when it gets hot outside the ice melts and floods the floor around the burrito station, and the water pools on the floor because the floor drain is

clogged. Erica is worried about being electrocuted because

she stands in the water making burritos, and the tortilla warmer has short-circuited at least 6 times in the last 18 months, causing all of the electricity in the kitchen to go out and there is a smell of smoke. Some of the water comes up out of the floor drain by the grill, flooding the area with greasy, slippery water for as much as a week at a time.

- **Restroom flooding:** sewage water comes up out of the toilet and restroom floor drain and floods the restroom, about 3 times per week.



Images: Above: 1/25/23: fryer fire. Below: Around 10/2023: Chicken floating in greasy flood water by the grill.

Then in May 2024, they filed another report with Cal/OSHA, this time about robbery and violence at the store – including that someone entered the store and put a gun to a worker’s head, and that management told them to “lock” the drive-thru window with a spoon.⁵²

STATEMENT OF CARMEN PONCE

I’ve been working at this El Pollo Loco store for 2 years. I started working as a cashier in the mornings, but a year ago management promoted me to shift leader and moved me to the late shift. Since then I have experienced much more violence at work. Most recently, around 5:30pm one evening at the end of January I was transferring money from the register at the front to the office when a man came into the store, jumped onto the counter and tried to rip the register from the counter. I was worried that he would see I had money, so I tried to hide. One of the cooks came out of the kitchen and confronted the man, and he ran off.

This was the second time someone tried to steal the cash register from the counter in just one month. It had happened ten days before as well. I wasn’t working that day, but I saw photos of the security footage posted in a group chat with other employees. On another day around the same time someone succeeded in stealing the cash register through the drive-thru window. They were able to steal the register because the lock on the window is broken. Management instructed us to keep the window secure by wedging a large spoon under the window latch (see photo below). I cannot believe that the theft happened in January and management has still not fixed the lock.



Spoon wedged under broken lock in drive-thru window

In October 2025, Carmen reported a cockroach infestation that was not being adequately addressed by management: “I see cockroaches nearly every day at this El Pollo Loco – at the burrito station, at the prep area, where we serve food, in the bathroom, at the cash register, and in June 2025 a customer found a cockroach in his taco.” Carmen added: “The District Manager (Imelda) tells us: ‘Kill the cockroaches before customers can see them.’”⁵³

TOXIC EXPOSURES

Rosa, Julia and Martha at a Yoshinoya in Los Angeles described exposure to excessive smoke from the black oil being used to fry shrimp, having to improvise with lemonade to clean the grill, using plastic bags instead of gloves to handle raw meats, and cleaning dishes without dish soap.⁵⁴

Rene and Dimir filed a complaint with Cal/OSHA describing toxic exposures including a gas leak from around the fryer and the re-thermalizer that had been ongoing for two months, and clogged sewers causing sewer water flooding and sewer gas exposure from floor drains in the kitchen and by the soda machine, ongoing for over a year.⁵⁵ They also reported an electrocution hazard from bare wires in the kitchen that had been ongoing for two weeks, with only some stickers that workers had placed on the bare wires for insulation; and that the AC was not working effectively in the kitchen, causing Rene and Dimir to suffer symptoms of heat illness including headache and excessive sweating at the grill and the fryer, and that the manager only gives them tiny cups of water. “We have burn scars on our arms from being up to our elbows cleaning hot appliances without PPE (long gloves), and without training on burn prevention or how to work with strong chemicals, and there is no first aid kit to treat the burns,” added the workers.

As Rene and Dimir described, sewer water flooding with water coming up from sewer lines or down through the roof are another repeated subject of worker complaints to regulators. **Burger King workers in San Jose put up an umbrella inside the store to protect the cash register from rain pouring down through the ceiling while they worked.**⁵⁶ Eulalia and Wilber, workers at a Taco Bell in Culver City, put stickers on the ceiling tiles to try to stop the rain from falling onto them while working on the line preparing burritos and tacos.⁵⁷ Carl’s Jr workers in Milpitas filed a Cal/OSHA complaint documenting clogged sewer drains in the kitchen, excessive smoke and other hazards.⁵⁸

Failing equipment is another recurring source of hazards for workers. In a powerful example of the importance of workers learning about their rights and how to uphold them, Romualda, a Wendy’s worker in Oakland, described that after she made a report to Cal/OSHA about how she got headaches that lasted for hours from a gas leak at one of the grills, Cal/OSHA inspected and the company replaced the grill.⁵⁹

Failing equipment is another recurring source of hazards for workers. In a powerful example of the importance of workers learning about their rights and how to uphold them, Romualda, a Wendy’s worker in Oakland, described that after she made a report to Cal/OSHA about how she got headaches that lasted for hours from a gas leak at one of the grills, Cal/OSHA inspected and the company replaced the grill.⁶⁰

Previously, workers at this Wendy’s filed several Cal/OSHA complaints reporting management’s failure to protect them from violence, describing incidents including when a coworker was shot in the face with a BB gun, and when workers were repeatedly threatened by a man with a bat – complaints that resulted in multiple citations and fines, as well as measures to make the workplace safer.

FAST FOOD - WORKER HEALTH & SAFETY - GAS LEAK - IMMINENT HAZARD - RESPONSE REQUESTED

CalOSHA Oakland District Office, Wendy Hogle-Lui, District Manager
1515 Clay Street, Ste. 1303, Oakland, CA 94612
Phone: (510) 622-2916

Email: DOSHOAK@dir.ca.gov

December 11, 2024

RE: **Wendy's, 3111 E 14th Street, Oakland CA 94601**

Owner: Mohammed A Shaikh, CEO, CFO, Secretary;
Amash Corporation; 5870 Stoneridge Mall Rd Ste 206 Pleasanton, CA 94588

My name is Romaulda Alcazar and I work at the Wendy's at 3111 E 14th St in Oakland. I am filing this Health & Safety Complaint to CalOSHA because of an ongoing problem where the pilot light on one of the grills has been broken for several months and I can smell leaking gas at least five times a shift, causing me to get headaches that last for hours, and management is not protecting us from this gas leak. Two months ago, the man who came to fix the gas leak said he couldn't fix it because the grill is too old, and that I should write a letter to document the problem so that if the grill explodes I could sue, but I can't sue if an explosion kills me, so I have to do something about it now and that is why I am filing this CalOSHA Complaint.

Around September, 2024, the pilot light on one of the grills broke and now turns off unexpectedly, leaking the smell of gas into the kitchen around five times a day. When we tell Maribel, the manager, that it smells like gas, she tells us to just light the pilot again, which is when one of my coworkers crawls under the grills and re-lights the pilot using the fire from the other grill. I work on the line near the drive-thru window which is next to the grill and the smell of gas can get so bad that it gives me headaches that last for hours, until I get home.

Before I got involved with the CA Fast Food Workers Union in 2022, I did not know that I had a right to a safe working environment and could file a complaint if management was neglecting to fix hazards in the workplace. Since my coworkers and I have organized and learned our rights, we have filed 3 complaints with CalOSHA (6/23/2022, 2/9/2023, 8/24/2023) including for the failure to protect us from ongoing violent incidents, including when a coworker was shot in the face with a BB gun, and when we were repeatedly threatened by a man with a bat; CalOSHA cited our employer for unsafe conditions on October 25, 2022 (Inspection No. 1608841), and again on May 22, 2023 (Inspection No. 1649402).

Please use the authority of CalOSHA to ensure management at this Wendy's protects workers from the hazard of gas leaks, including:

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INJURIES

Workers describe that they fear reporting workplace injuries, and management often fails to provide first aid or medical care, or provide the information workers need to access the care and paid, job-protected time off to which they are entitled. Remedios, a McDonald's worker, suffered a serious head injury working alone on the roof when a broken metal door closed on his head. After the accident, he was out of work, without income, for seven weeks.⁶¹ He and his wife had to borrow money from friends and family to pay the rent, and rely on food from the church and selling sweets in the street.

Elizabeth, a Subway worker in Los Angeles, reported that **management did not offer her first aid or medical care** when her foot was burned by boiling water, and **she was left to do her best with what could find, covering the burn with oil and mustard and wrapping it in a napkin while continuing to work.**⁶² When oil splashed on Celia's arm causing a burn the length of her arm, she told her manager she didn't want to go to the doctor because she couldn't afford it, and she was afraid management at the McDonald's where she worked would retaliate against her.⁶³

WORKING SICK

Twelve Panera workers in South Gate reported the common problem of being forced to work sick, with symptoms including vomiting and diarrhea, and that severe short-staffing was resulting in mental health symptoms, including panic attacks at work.⁶⁴ The workers also reported that garbage regularly piled up inside the store, blocking the exit.

Wingstop workers in Los Angeles reported being forced to work sick, and that management would write "no call off" on the schedule for certain days when they anticipated a lot of orders, like for important football games, meaning workers were not allowed to call off on those days, even if sick.⁶⁵ Management cut Erika's schedule after she missed just one day of work when she called off telling the manager that she felt sick and had tested positive for COVID. After she got sick with another respiratory infection four months later, with symptoms including feeling sick, coughing and her throat swelling up, management cut Erika's schedule again for over a month. Edgar was ordered to come to work while sick with diarrhea and also after testing positive for COVID and with symptoms including cough and fever. In a complaint to Cal/OSHA, Wingstop workers also reported burn hazards – including being forced to lean on a ladder over boiling oil to clean vent hoods with fryers in use – and threats of violence from an assistant manager who openly drank at work, brought a gun to work and threatened to harm a worker if he filed a complaint.

When Isabela was sick with COVID, she sent a picture of her positive COVID test to the district manager of the Taco Bell in El Dorado Hills where she was working, and told him on the phone that "everything hurts."⁶⁶ The district manager texted back: "Its okay, you don't need to quarantine, just drink a lot of orange juice." Isabela texted to ask if she should still work, and he texted back: "like a true warrior," so Isabela went to work sick with COVID.

EXCESSIVE HEAT

Excessive heat is among the most dangerous hazards fast food workers face, with pregnant workers and workers with diabetes and other common medical conditions especially at risk.

FAST FOOD - WORKER HEALTH AND SAFETY - EXCESSIVE HEAT - BROKEN AC - IMMINENT HAZARD - RESPONSE REQUESTED

CalOSHA, Fremont District Office, Kelly Tatum, District Manager
39141 Civic Center Dr. Suite 310 Fremont, CA 94538
Phone: (510) 794-2521

Via email: DOSHfremont@dir.ca.gov

July 23, 2025

RE: El Pollo Loco, 2131 Monterey Rd, San Jose CA 95125
Employer: Roland Spongberg, CEO; Paul Tanner, CFO; Jay Spongberg VP and COO;
WKS Restaurant Corporation; 5856 Corporate Ave Ste 200 Cypress, CA 90630

We are Erika Medina and Auxiliadora Lopez and we work at the El Pollo Loco at 2131 Monterey Rd in San Jose. We are writing this complaint because the AC is not working in the kitchen, and we are being exposed to the hazard of excessive heat, with temperatures in the kitchen reaching the 90s. This is an ongoing problem. Auxiliadora has a high risk pregnancy, and gets so hot and dizzy from the excessive heat at work that she has to lean against the wall and drink water to avoid falling, which is not safe. When it gets too hot, Erika sweats so much that her clothes stick to her body, she gets headaches, and feels desperate for cooler air.

We try to cool the kitchen down by opening the drive thru window, which helps sometimes, but when it is hot outside and the drive-thru is full, it feels like the heat from the hot cars pours in and makes the kitchen hotter. The AC has not worked properly in the kitchen for as long as Auxiliadora can remember. When we ask management to turn on the AC, we get different answers, sometimes they say it is already on, or that it only works well in some parts of the store, or that it is broken.



This image from 7/11/25 shows that it was 91.8 degrees in the kitchen.

Even though we legally have the right to cooling and water breaks, we are not given the time to take them. Management does not encourage us to drink water on hot days. Recently Erika made an effort to stay hydrated, which meant she needed to use the restroom more often. She was unable to finish all of the orders on her screen before she left for the restroom, and when she got back to her position after just a couple minutes, the manager was visibly annoyed.

We do not feel like we have been properly trained on how to stay safe in excessive heat. In June, management showed Erika a

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At an El Pollo Loco in San Jose, Auxiliadora, who had a high risk pregnancy, got so hot and dizzy when the AC wasn't working in the kitchen that she had to lean against the wall to avoid falling.⁶⁷

At a Popeyes in Citrus Heights, Daisy reported that when she was five months pregnant, management screamed at her, sent her home early and threatened to call the police on her if she did not leave right away.⁶⁸ The reason? She had to use the restroom due to drinking water to stay hydrated when temperatures were in the 90s inside the restaurant.

On June 10, 2024, workers in San Jose reported experiencing heat illness when temperatures reached the 100s inside McDonald's – one worker at the grill got so hot she said her head hurt and “her face got so red that she looked like a tomato”.⁶⁹ The AC has broken repeatedly, and the workers previously filed excessive heat complaints in August 2023 when temperatures reached 104 in the kitchen,⁷⁰ and again a month later when thermometers measured temperatures of 108 degrees in the kitchen.⁷¹ “CalOSHA came out to inspect, issued citations and management fixed the AC, but now it broke again, and management did not take necessary action to prevent us from experiencing heat illness. The AC has been breaking repeatedly for several years,” described the workers.

With triple-digit temperatures in an Alhambra Taco Bell where she worked, Martha felt the energy completely drain from her body, and her skin and lips turned white from the heat.⁷² At a Jack in the Box in Folsom, the AC broke and management closed the lobby but told kitchen workers, “it is hot, but it’s ok because we are going to lose weight.”⁷³ When Sara replied, “I am not going to lose weight, I am going to pass out on this grill,” the manager laughed.

FAST FOOD - WORKER HEALTH & SAFETY - EXCESSIVE HEAT - IMMINENT HAZARD - RESPONSE REQUESTED

CalOSHA, Fremont District Office, Kelly Tatum, District Manager
39141 Civic Center Dr Ste 310, Fremont CA 94538
Phone: (510) 794-2521, Fax: (510) 794-3889

Via email: DOSHfremont@dir.ca.gov

July 23, 2024

RE: McDonald's, 7150 Camino Arroyo Dr, Gilroy CA 95020

Employer: Arnold Hospitality Inc; Landon Hofman, CEO; Suzzette Hofman, Secretary
1100 Del Monte Ave, Monterey CA 93940

My name is Marbella Serrano and I work at the McDonald's at 7150 Camino Arroyo Dr in Gilroy. This McDonald's (inside a Walmart store) gets excessively hot on hot days, with temperatures over 90 degrees in the kitchen, the AC is off or not working, and my coworkers and I are experiencing symptoms from exposure to excessive heat including nausea, excessive sweating and headaches. Management of this McDonald's is not taking necessary action to protect our health and safety from the hazard of excessive heat. CalOSHA has the authority to take action under the Injury and Illness Prevention Program standard to protect us from hazards including excessive heat. Excessive heat is a workplace hazard at this location, and our employer can and should inform workers about this hazard, take steps to mitigate the hazard, and train us in safe practices.



On July 11, 2024, it got so hot that I got a bad headache, had a really dry mouth, and was sweating excessively, and when I told the shift manager Brian that I had a headache, he said that he did too - “from the heat”. Sometimes it gets so hot that I feel suffocated as if I am wearing a sweater, and sweat drips down my entire body. The McDonald's is inside a Walmart and there are no windows or doors to the outside that would cool down the kitchen. When customers come in on hot days, they don't sit in the lobby because it is too hot, they just take their food to go.

With temperatures inside McDonald's in the 90s, Marbella experienced symptoms of heat illness including headache, dry mouth and excessive sweating.⁷⁴ When Marbella told the shift manager that she had a headache, he said he had a headache too, “from the heat.”

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Violence is another frequent topic of fast food worker complaints to Cal/OSHA. Workers who learn about their rights and how to report violations when facing one kind of hazard may go on to report other hazards as they emerge.

In August 2024, workers at a Domino's in Los Angeles filed a complaint with Cal/OSHA about violence, lack of training and poor incident response by management.⁷⁵ In the complaint, Orlando and Rosa described that **a man was murdered at the back door one afternoon while they were working, and management kept the store open throughout the police investigation and forced their coworker to clean up the bloody crime scene, without any support, training or PPE.**

Estela reported ongoing violent incidents at a Subway in Los Angeles including an attack by a man who threw six heavy metal chairs and a cash register at her, two separate incidents of being threatened with knives, and threats from customers making statements including: **“Shut up old lady I’m going to kill you, I’m going to wring your neck.”**⁷⁶

FAST FOOD - WORKER HEALTH & SAFETY - VIOLENCE - IMMINENT HAZARD - RESPONSE REQUESTED

CalOSHA
 Vacant, District Manager, Los Angeles District Office
 320 West 4th Street Room 820, Los Angeles CA 90013
 Tel: (213) 576-7451, Fax: (213) 576-7461

Via email: DOSHLA@dir.ca.gov

August 20, 2024

RE: **Domino's, 270 S Rampart Blvd, Los Angeles CA 90057**

Employer: SOCAL4 LLC; Malli Patibandla Rao, Manager
 1935 E Colorado Blvd #B, Pasadena CA 91107

We are Orlando Trujillo and Rosa Delgado, we work at the Domino's at 270 S Rampart Blvd in Los Angeles, and we are writing this CalOSHA Complaint because violent disturbances and threats are an ongoing hazard at this store and while we are out on deliveries, with disturbing incidents at the drive-thru and in the parking lot occurring about once a week. **While we were working on an afternoon in early July 2024, a man was murdered at the back door of this Domino's store, and management kept the store open throughout the police investigation and forced our coworker to clean up the bloody crime scene, without any support, training or PPE.** In another recent incident from mid-June, a customer upset about salsa grabbed things through the drive-thru window and threw them at us, making threats. Management did not inform us about the new Workplace Violence law (Labor Code Sec 6401.9) that went into effect July 1, 2024, and management has failed to implement an effective Workplace Violence Prevention Plan, train us on how to stay safe when incidents occur, or care for our physical and mental health after violent incidents, for example, by asking us if we are ok, offering trauma counseling and providing information about medical and mental health resources that are available to us, for example, through Workers Compensation.

Recent and ongoing violence hazards at this Domino's store include:

- **Poor incident response - example: murder at back door and crime scene clean-up**

One afternoon in early July 2024 at around 3 pm, one of the people who lived in an encampment behind the parking lot was chased to the back door of this Domino's store and killed. This was traumatic for us, especially because we believe we must have been familiar with the man, who was among the 6 or 7 men who have been living behind the store for around a year. Rosa began her shift around the time that the paramedics were arriving, she was never informed by management about what was happening, and she

FAST FOOD - CALOSHA - VIOLENCE (INJURY) - LACK OF RESTROOM BREAKS - IMMINENT HAZARD - RESPONSE REQUESTED

CalOSHA Los Angeles District Office
 Vacant, District Manager
 320 West 4th Street, Suite 820 Los Angeles, CA 90013
 Tel: (213) 576-7451; Fax: (213) 576-7461

Via email: DOSHLA@dir.ca.gov

August 20, 2024

RE: **McDonald's, 2224 N Figueroa St, Los Angeles, CA 90065 - 2nd Complaint**

Employer: Dean Sanchez, CEO, Manager/Member, Agent; DRS Hospitality LLC
 1000 Lakes Dr Ste 165, West Covina CA 91790

We are Carlota Guzman, Catalina Reyes, and Matilde Montoya and we have a combined 39 years experience working at the McDonald's at 2224 N Figueroa St in Los Angeles. On November 8, 2023 we and our coworkers filed a violence complaint with CalOSHA describing that we are subjected to frequent violent and threatening incidents from angry customers and people who come to the store to cause harm, including a May 2023 incident in which **a man drew a knife and held it against a woman who had children with her.** During that incident, our coworker shouted to the managers to call the police, and the managers responded that she would have to call the police herself. After that incident, management did not provide training or increased security, and did not ask us if we were ok or offer us services such as trauma counseling or mental health care or let us know that we could access these services, for example, through Workers Compensation. **Since we filed the first CalOSHA Violence Complaint in November 2023, there have been several new serious violent incidents, including two that resulted in worker injuries:**

- July 24, 2024: **After being refused a refund for his coffee purchase, an angry customer threw a cup of ice at an employee, bruising her eye.**
- June 2024, 9am: **A man ran into the kitchen through the open back door, left, and returned 10 minutes later being pursued by police and a helicopter.** The police evacuated the store so they could use rubber bullets. This incident was terrifying and we didn't know what to do. After the incident, management did not ask us if we were ok, and we were not offered trauma counseling or information about how to access mental health services. After this incident, management hired security, but only for certain hours during the day, at this 24-hour McDonald's.
- January 23, 2024: **A woman with a large wooden stick entered the store and demanded Carlota give her free food, and when Carlota refused, she started swinging the stick, trying to destroy**

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Workers at a Jack in the Box in Rancho Cordova reported management was not protecting them from frequent violent incidents, including cash register robberies, someone coming around the store with a pistol, and an incident in which a man pulled out a knife and threatened to slit a worker's throat.⁷⁷ The workers also reported that the lock on the door to the kitchen area had been broken for years.

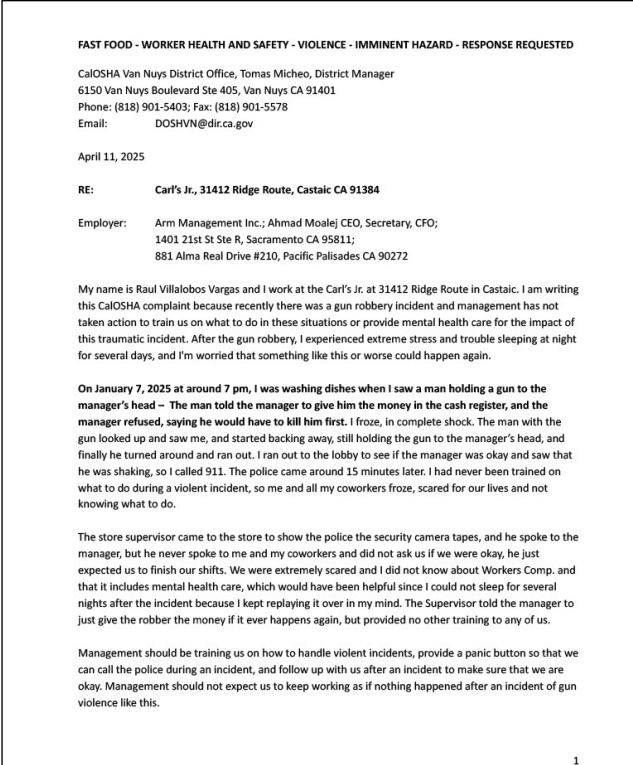
The complaints go on. Carlota, Catalina and Matilde reported relentless fear and violence working at a McDonald's in Los Angeles, including an incident where a man drew a knife and held it against a woman who had children with her, a man ran through the open back door chased by police and a helicopter, and a worker was hospitalized after being hit in the head by someone living behind the store.⁷⁸

Raul reported that while he was washing dishes at the Carl's Jr. in Castaic, he saw a man put a gun to his manager's head.⁷⁹ **“The man told the manager to give him the money in the cash register, and the manager refused, saying he would have to kill him first.”**

Workers at a McDonald's in Monterey Park reported that when management alerted the new remote security monitoring company to a threatening customer in the lobby, the remote monitor used a loudspeaker to ask if everything was ok, and the man causing the disturbance answered, **“We're ok,” dismissing the security monitor and leaving the workers alone to handle the situation.**⁸⁰ The workers stated that lack of cameras and the fact that anyone can dismiss the security monitor, including the perpetrator, are obvious flaws in the new security system.

After another incident in which the remote monitoring was ineffective, the workers added: **“It felt like God sent police officers to get lunch here, because the police happened to be at the store when the man came back, and they handled the situation. They chased the man, and we don't know what happened after that.”**

A throughline in these complaints filed with regulators is workers reporting not receiving the training they need to prevent and respond to hazards.



LACK OF TRAINING

Across all types of complaints, workers report that they lack the training they need, including training that is often required under food safety, worker safety and other laws and regulations. When online trainings are required, workers report examples of managers doing the trainings on their behalf. Sara, a Jack in the Box worker in Folsom, reported an example where the manager texted her about an online training: “you do harassment and I will do the rest”.⁸¹

In January 2026, Gabriela, working at the Taco Bell in El Dorado Hills, saw that a training that she had not taken had already been completed and a coworker told her that the store manager had done the online training for her, and another worker in the store, Isabella, saw the store manager in his office completing several trainings for a worker who was not present.⁸² When Isabel showed pictures to the district manager of the trainings that were being completed by the store manager on behalf of the workers, the district manager told her to “stop gossiping”.

FAST FOOD - FOOD SAFETY - VERMIN (RODENTS, COCKROACHES) - ROTTEN FOOD BEING SERVED - FORCED TO WORK SICK (DIARRHEA, COVID) - FOOD (EGGS) NOT COOKED TO SAFE TEMPERATURE - LACK OF FOOD PREP AND FOOD SAFETY TRAINING - IMMINENT HAZARD - RESPONSE REQUESTED

El Dorado County Department of Environmental Management; Tel: (530) 621-5300
Via email: emd.info@edcgov.us and via [webportal](#)
February 9, 2026

RE: Taco Bell, 3967 Park Dr, El Dorado Hills, CA 95762
Owner: J.A. Sutherland Inc; Janice A Sutherland, CEO; Leslie Shank, Secretary;
Katherine Burris, CFO; 1199 N State St, Ukiah CA 95482
Taco Bell Corp, 1 Glen Bell Way, Irvine CA 92618
YUM! Brands Inc, 1441 Gardiner Lane, Louisville KY 40213

We are Isabela Borges Ramirez and Gabriela Flores Carpio and we work at the Taco Bell at 3967 Park Drive in El Dorado Hills. We are filing this food safety complaint because food safety is an ongoing problem at this Taco Bell store. We have repeatedly reported food safety problems to the Store Manager, the District Manager and HR at the franchise owner. – verbally and by text – including such problems as: moldy chicken nuggets being served to customers (1/31/2026); undercooked eggs being served to customers (1/17/2026); open bags of food being heated for



1/31/2026: Moldy chicken nuggets that were being served to customers.

customers (1/17/2026); open bags of food being heated for serving in the thermalizer, allowing oily water to contaminate the food (2/1/2026); rotten slimy tomatoes and lettuce being served to customers; rat and roach infestations; being forced to work sick with transmissible illnesses including diarrhea and COVID; lack of proper sanitation processes in the kitchen and store; and lack of training on food safety and sanitation. Neither management of this Taco Bell franchise nor the corporate franchisor Yum! Brands has taken effective action to address these problems, putting our health and the health of our customers at risk. **The store manager told us that if we throw away any food, he will fire us, so we can't even throw away chips when cockroaches walk on them. After Isabela asked the store manager not to serve raw eggs, she learned from a co-worker that he gave her a warning.**

Food safety is an ongoing problem at this Taco Bell. Here are some examples:

- **Moldy chicken nuggets served to customers 1/31/2026 - Store manager (Evan) told Isabela to continue serving moldy chicken nuggets after she showed him the mold, until he saw that she was taking pictures and videos.**
- **Undercooked eggs served to customers on 1/17/2026 –Isabela saw the store manager (Evan) remove the eggs from the thermalizer after just 15 minutes, which is not enough time for the**

“The store manager told us that if we throw away any food, he will fire us, so we can’t even throw away chips when cockroaches walk on them,” stated Isabela and Gabriela in a complaint filed with the El Dorado County Environmental Health Department. Source: Complaint filed with the El Dorado County Environmental Health Dept February 9, 2025.

FAST FOOD - FORCED TO WORK SICK (COVID, DIARRHEA) - EXPOSURE TO VERMIN (RODENTS, COCKROACHES) - IMMINENT HAZARD - RESPONSE REQUESTED

CalOSHA, Sacramento District Office; Joseph Crocker, District Manager
1750 Howe Ave Suite 430, Sacramento CA 95825; Phone: (916) 263-2800

VIA EMAIL: DOSHSAC@dir.ca.gov

February 9, 2026

RE: Taco Bell, 3967 Park Dr, El Dorado Hills CA 95762
Owner: J.A. Sutherland Inc; Janice A Sutherland, CEO; Leslie Shank, Secretary;
Katherine Burris, CFO; 1199 N State St, Ukiah CA 95482
Taco Bell Corp, 1 Glen Bell Way, Irvine CA 92618
YUM! Brands Inc, 1441 Gardiner Lane, Louisville KY 40213

We are Isabela Borges Ramirez and Gabriela Flores Carpio and we work at the Taco Bell at 3967 Park Drive in El Dorado Hills. We are filing this worker health and safety complaint because we are being exposed to roaches (ongoing) and rats (most recently Sept 2025) in the kitchen and lobby. Management also forces us to work sick with potentially transmissible illnesses, including forcing Isabela to work sick with diarrhea (July 2025) and COVID (March 2025), endangering our health and potentially spreading illness to our coworkers and customers. Management of this Taco Bell has not provided us with the health and safety training we need on how to protect ourselves from vermin, or how to safely do the tasks that management tells us to do, including killing and disposing of vermin, and disinfecting the store from vermin. Management also has not trained us about our rights regarding taking sick leave when we are sick, which is vital for worker safety and for the safety of our customers.



9/12/2025: Dead rat decomposed for days in the lobby behind the soda machine.

Also, we have found that management does trainings for us that are assigned to us in the online training system. Last fall Isabela saw that the store manager Evan was completing trainings online for another worker at the store. In January 2026, Gabriela noticed that a training that was assigned to her was mysteriously completed, and when she asked a coworker about it, the coworker told her that Evan had done it for her.

EXPOSURE TO VERMIN

- **ROACHES** - ongoing - We see cockroaches crawling on cooking surfaces and on food. **When Isabela texted the district manager "more roaches," he responded "kill them" and added "they fumigated on Tuesday"**. We continue to report the roaches when we see them, including most recently about a month ago.

- **DEAD RAT WITH MAGGOTS IN LOBBY** - In Sept 2025 Isabela noticed a rotten smell; when she returned to work a few days later, the smell was so bad that she searched the store until she

Isabela vomited when she found a decomposing rat behind the soda machine at the Taco Bell in El Dorado Hills.
Source: Cal/OSHA complaint filed February 9, 2026.

FAST FOOD - WORKER HEALTH AND SAFETY - RATS - IMMINENT HAZARD - RESPONSE REQUESTED

CalOSHA

Wendy Hogle-Lui, Oakland District Manager

1515 Clay Street, Suite 1303, Oakland, CA 94612, Tel: (510) 622-2916; Fax: (510) 622-2908

Via email: DOSHOAK@dir.ca.gov

May 1, 2024

RE: McDonald's, 1330 Jackson St, Oakland CA 94612

Employer: Joseph Wong, SK Enterprises Inc ,704 Alfred Nobel Drive, Hercules, CA 94547

We are Angelica Garcia and Oscar Rodriguez and we work at the McDonald's at 1330 Jackson St in Oakland. We are filing this complaint because we are exposed to rats and rat excrement every day and management isn't taking the necessary action to protect us.

We see rats in the kitchen every day. We see rats at the grill where we make the hamburgers, nibbling on pieces of bacon or on hamburgers that are ready to be sent to the customers, and we see rat droppings next to the bags of chicken nuggets, Big Macs, and the papers we wrap around cheeseburgers. We don't send the food to customers if we see a rat has taken a bite out of it, but we

have to work so fast that sometimes we notice too late that we have been serving from bags of bread with rat bites. We have both accidentally touched rat droppings on multiple occasions and Angelica has had to kill a rat with a broom. Management had exterminators come in March, but we still hear and see rats every day. When we bring the rats to their attention, management doesn't say anything.



When management saw a worker take a picture of a rat in the kitchen on February 4, 2024, they told us if we were caught taking pictures or videos we would get a warning or be fired, and soon after they put up a sign saying "No Video No Photos No Recording." Management also told us that if anyone finds out about the rats then OSHA will come and close the store and we will lose our jobs. We learned about our rights from the CA Fast Food Workers Union, and we know we have the right to advocate for a safer work environment, and that it is illegal for management to retaliate against us for speaking up about unsafe working conditions and reporting such conditions to CalOSHA.

Image: Rat on top of bacon station, 12/15/2023

When rats overran a McDonald's in Oakland, management posted a sign: "No Video No Photos No Recording," and told workers they would get a warning or be fired if they took pictures of the rats. Source: Cal/OSHA complaint filed May 1, 2024.

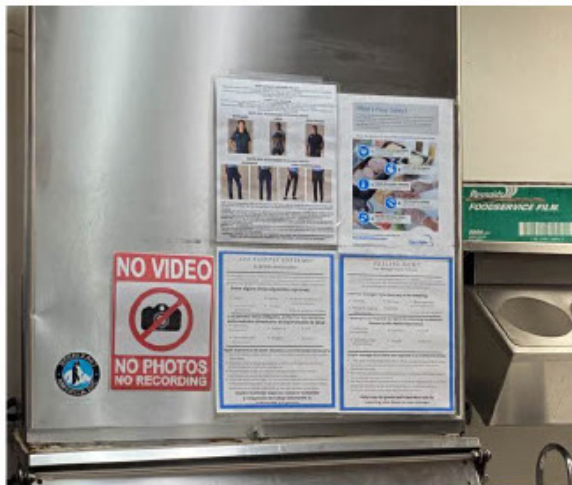
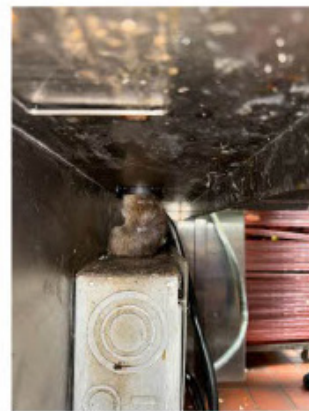


Image: (1) Rat stuck in hole in the food warmer 2/4/2024; (2) Sign prohibiting videos and photos



Images: (1) Above: dead rat in glue trap, around the end of February, 2024; (2)(3) bottom: Rat stuck in food warmer 2/4/2024.

FAST FOOD - WORKER HEALTH AND SAFETY - CONSUMER SAFETY - RATS - SERVING EXPIRED, ROTTEN & RAT-CONTAMINATED FOOD - IMMINENT HAZARD - RESPONSE REQUESTED

CalOSHA, Sacramento District Office; Joseph Crocker, District Manager
1750 Howe Ave Suite 430, Sacramento CA 95825; Phone: (916) 263-2800
VIA EMAIL: DOSHSAC@dir.ca.gov

Placer County Department of Environmental Health
11424 B Ave Ste 400, Auburn CA 95603; (530) 745-2300; FAX 530 745-2370
Via Online Complaint Form

September 8, 2025

RE: Jack in the Box, 8655 Auburn Blvd, Roseville CA 95661

**Employer: Anil Yadav, CEO, CFO, Secretary; Nor-Cal Venture Group Inc
3550 Mowry Ave Suite 301, Fremont CA 94538, (510) 792-3393**

We are Elsa Aguilar and Estela Ramirez and we work at the Jack in the Box at 8655 Auburn Blvd in Roseville. We are filing this complaint with CalOSHA and the Placer County Environmental Health Dept because there is a rat infestation at this store right now, and management is not taking action to stop the rat infestation or sanitize the store, and there is no system in place to protect consumers or workers from rat-contaminated, rotten and expired food, including bread, produce and chicken.



8/13/2025: Rat-bitten bread. At the beginning of her afternoon shift on 8/13/2025, Elsa reached into the half-empty bag of bread that was currently in use and being served to customers, and pulled out this piece of rat-bitten bread.

Since early August 2025, bread and other food potentially contaminated by rats are being served to customers. Management instructs us, "If it looks good, use it," and they do not allow us to throw away bags or boxes of food that rats have bitten into or entered. We have to sort through the containers of rat-bitten food and only throw away the pieces where we notice rat bites, and serve the rest.

We also are not allowed to throw away whole boxes or containers of rotten or expired food. For example, on August 16, 2025, the manager, Alondra, saw that one of our coworkers had thrown out a box of rotten lettuce and said to Estela, "You all are throwing away a lot, that is not ok, because the store loses, you have to review it and still use the good parts."

"Management instructs us, 'If it looks good, use it,' and they do not allow us to throw away bags or boxes of food that rats have bitten into or entered," reported Elsa and Estela in a complaint about a Jack in the Box in Roseville. Source: Complaints filed with Cal/OSHA and the Placer County Dept of Environmental Health September 8, 2025.

FAST FOOD - PUBLIC HEALTH COMPLAINT - RATS - FLOODING (ELECTROCUTION, SLIP HAZARDS) - SMOKE - IMMINENT HAZARD - RESPONSE REQUESTED

Santa Clara County Dept of Env Health

Via email: DEHWEB@cep.sccgov.org

CalOSHA, Kelley Tatum, Fremont District Manager

Via email: DOSHfremont@dir.ca.gov

April 2, 2024

RE: **Burger King, 4040 Monterey Hwy, San Jose CA 95111**

Please see also related complaints filed with CalOSHA 10/11/23, 11/30/23 & 1/11/24

Employer: Hansa Chhaddva, CEO; Vinod Chhaddva, Secretary; Priya Chhaddva, CFO

S J Quickbite Inc dba Burger King, 240 Francisco Lane #14215, Fremont, CA 94539

My name is Consuelo Perez Bautista and I have been working at the Burger King at 4040 Monterey Hwy in San Jose for about 6 years. I am filing this complaint with Santa Clara County DEH and CalOSHA because the rats, excessive smoke, and flooding are putting the health of customers and workers at risk. **I see bites in the bread, which I believe are from rats, and my coworkers and I don't always notice until we have already served half a bag; and water gets in everywhere, and I am worried that my coworkers and I and the customers could get electrocuted, or slip and have a bad fall.** The vent fan over the grill broke on 3/30/24 and the kitchen is now (4/1/24) full of smoke making my eyes water, my throat and head hurt, and making it hard to breathe. Rain pours in through the ceiling tiles and lighting fixtures and pools on the floor, most recently on 3/31/24; and water also pools at the floor drains in the lobby and by the ice machine for 4-5 days at a time when drains get clogged, seemingly from pouring grease down the drains, most recently 3/9-12/24. I still see rats in the store.

Images (left to right): (1)smoke from broken vent fan 4/1/24; (2) rain inside drive-thru 2/4/24; (3) rat 1/23/24.



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Burger King workers in San Jose put up an umbrella inside the store to protect the cash register from rain pouring down through the ceiling while they worked. Source: Complaints filed with Cal/OSHA and the Santa Clara County Dept of Environmental Health April 2, 2024.

FAST FOOD - WORKER SAFETY - FOOD SAFETY - COCKROACHES - LACK OF PPE (GLOVES FOR HANDLING RAW CHICKEN) - LACK OF CLEANING PRODUCTS (GRILL CLEANER, DISH SOAP) - LACK OF TRAINING ON CLEANING AND PROPER USE OF CLEANING PRODUCTS - LACK OF CLEANING - RESPONSE REQUESTED

CalOSHA Los Angeles District Office - Muhammad Zubair, District Manager
320 West 4th Street Rm 820, Los Angeles CA 90013; Tel: (213) 576-7451; Fax: (213) 576-7461
Via email: DOSHLA@dir.ca.gov

LA County Public Health; Tel: (888) 700-9995
Via email: ehmail@ph.lacounty.gov

September 15, 2025

RE: Yoshinoya, 1461 S La Cienega Blvd, Los Angeles CA 90035

Employer: Yoshinoya America Inc, 991 W Knox St, Torrance CA 90502
Norihiro Ozawa, CEO; Fumiko Carney, Secretary; Satoshi Nishimori, CFO

We are Julia Gonzalez, Martha Fraga, and Rosa Gonzalez, we work at the Yoshinoya at 1461 S La Cienega Blvd in Los Angeles, and we are writing this complaint because of worker safety and food safety problems at this store. Some of the same problems that cause health and safety hazards for us and our coworkers also potentially cause food safety problems for customers. **Management cuts corners on ordering supplies such as PPE (gloves for handling raw chicken), dish soap, grill cleaner and oil - we**



often run out of these items and have to make do by improvising, for example, using plastic bags as gloves, using lemonade and water to clean the grill, cleaning the dishes without dish soap, and using oil after it has turned black.

Management also cuts corners on time for cleaning surfaces and equipment, and on changing and filtering the oil in the fryer. We have seen cockroaches run around the cash register and they have been found dead in the kitchen, most recently in August (2025). Grease leaks from an uncleaned ceiling vent fan onto cooking chicken.

6/3/2025: The smoke that comes off the oil in the fryer causes Julia's throat to sting and eyes to burn.

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Julia, Martha and Rosa reported that grease leaks from an uncleaned vent fan onto cooking chicken, and workers improvise with lemonade to clean the grill and use plastic bags for gloves to handle raw meat at a Yoshinoya in Los Angeles. Source: Complaints filed with Cal/OSHA and the Los Angeles County Dept of Environmental Health September 15, 2025.

FAST FOOD - WORKER HEALTH & SAFETY - EXCESSIVE HEAT & COLD - LEAKS IN ROOF (SLIPPING HAZARD) - SEWER GAS (KITCHEN, RESTROOMS, MOP CLOSET) - EXCESSIVE SMOKE (FRYER) - IMMINENT HAZARD - RESPONSE REQUESTED

CalOSHA

Kelly Tatum, Fremont District Manager

39141 Civic Center Dr., Suite 310, Fremont CA 94538

Tel: (510) 794-2521; Fax: (510) 794-3889

Via email: DOSHfremont@dir.ca.gov

April 30, 2024

RE: Carl's Jr, 1890 McCandless Dr, Milpitas CA 95035

Owner: Vikas Tandon, CEO, CFO, Director; Sahil Tandon, Secretary
UIS South Bay Inc, 5869 Jarvis Ave, Newark CA 94560

We are Irma Hernandez, Margot Bibiano, Laura Valencia, Luna Mondragon and Maria Felix Flores and we work at the Carl's Jr store located at 1890 McCandless Dr in Milpitas. We learned we have the right to work in a safe place, and we want management at this Carl's Jr to fix the health and safety hazards

that affect us, including: excessive heat and cold, leaks in the roof that create slipping hazards, clogged floor drains/sewers that result in sewer gas exposure, exposure to terrible smells and excessive smoke from the fryer, and broken pilot light on the grill.

- **Sewer gas (clogged drains/sewers):** Maria gets nauseated from the smell of the clogged floor drains and sewer lines in the kitchen, mop closet and restroom.

- **Leaking roof (slipping hazard):** Luna is in charge of putting out the buckets when it rains; she typically puts 6 buckets in the kitchen between the line and the fryer to catch the leaks from the ceiling. Luna has slipped multiple times and is worried she could have a bad fall. The leaks in the ceiling cause the ceiling tiles to fall apart.

- **Excessive heat:** The AC has not worked well for years. Margot asked the District Manager about the broken AC in December, and he said fixing it is too expensive. Two people recently came to fix the AC but it is still broken. Sometimes it works for a while and then it breaks again. The heat is worst in the kitchen, but it also gets hot in the front area. Maria and Luna get bad headaches from the heat, and the heat also causes Luna to sweat excessively - these are symptoms of heat illness.



Photos: Clogged floor drains, April 16, 2024.

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In April 2024, workers documented clogged sewer drains in the kitchen, sewer gas, smoke and other hazards at a Carl's Jr. in Milpitas, and that the district manager said fixing the AC was too expensive. Source: Cal/OSHA complaint filed April 30, 2024.

**FAST FOOD - WORKER HEALTH & SAFETY - SEWER GAS (KITCHEN) - EXCESSIVE SMOKE (BROKEN FRYER)
- UNSAFE WORKLOAD - 2ND COMPLAINT - WILLFUL AND REPEAT VIOLATIONS - RESPONSE REQUESTED**

CalOSHA

Kelly Tatum, Fremont District Manager

39141 Civic Center Dr., Suite 310, Fremont CA 94538

Tel: (510) 794-2521; Fax: (510) 794-3889

Via email: DOSHfremont@dir.ca.gov

November 5, 2025

**RE: Carl's Jr, 1890 McCandless Dr, Milpitas CA 95035 - 2nd CalOSHA Complaint
-Please see CalOSHA complaint filed 4/30/24, attached**

**Owner: Vikas Tandon, CEO, CFO, Director; Sahil Tandon, Secretary
UIS South Bay Inc, 5869 Jarvis Ave, Newark CA 94560**

We are Irma Hernandez, Luna Mondragon and Laura Valencia and we are writing this second CalOSHA complaint to report ongoing health and safety hazards at the Carl's Jr store located at 1890 McCandless Dr in Milpitas. Irma and Luna work at this store, and Laura worked at this store for about 10 years until she was fired on November 3, 2025 after speaking up about health and safety issues at the store.



11/4/2025: Broken fryer- only the middle section works, and the oil is black, causing excessive smoke exposure, which is a health hazard.

Management at this Carl's Jr is continuing to expose us to the known and ongoing hazards of sewer gas which smells like human excrement and seeps up from the floor drains in the kitchen, and to the hazard of excessive smoke from the fryer, which is still partially broken. This Carl's Jr. is also severely short-staffed, and as a result, the workload we are required to do is too intense, causing us to experience unhealthy levels of stress and anxiety and to seek medical care. We have not been trained on how to protect our health from these hazards, and when we tell the store manager (Nayeli) about the many health and safety and food safety hazards at the store, she ignores us, laughs at us, makes fun of us, tells us that she is sick of us, and retaliates against us.

We have been raising health and safety and food safety issues at this store persistently since at least last year, when we learned about our rights to work in a safe

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In November 2025, workers filed a second complaint reporting that Laura, who had worked at the store for 10 years, was fired for speaking up about health and safety hazards, adding that sewer gas and excessive smoke exposures continued, and that short-staffing was resulting in workloads that were too intense, causing workers to seek medical care for unhealthy levels of stress and anxiety at work. Source: Cal/OSHA complaint filed November 5, 2025.

FAST FOOD - WAGE THEFT - WAGE CLAIM - LACK OF PAID SICK LEAVE - LACK OF VACATION PAY - RESPONSE REQUESTED

DLSE-Wage Claims, Labor Commissioner's Office, San Jose
224 Airport Parkway, Ste 200, San Jose CA 95110-1022, (408) 277-1266

Via email: LaborComm.WCA.SJO@dir.ca.gov

June 27, 2024

RE: McDonald's, 1451 Coleman Ave, Santa Clara
CalOSHA complaint filed 6/7/2024

Owner: Cosme Fagundo, CEO, CFO; Dania Fagundo, Secretary, CAM-BAS Inc
711 Calle Artis, San Jose CA 95131, (408) 955-0200

My name is Remedios Rodriguez and I work at the McDonald's located at 1451 Coleman Ave in Santa Clara. I am writing this Wage Theft Complaint because on April 25, 2024 I suffered a serious injury to my head, and also to my back and shoulder, when a metal door closed on my head as I was bent over

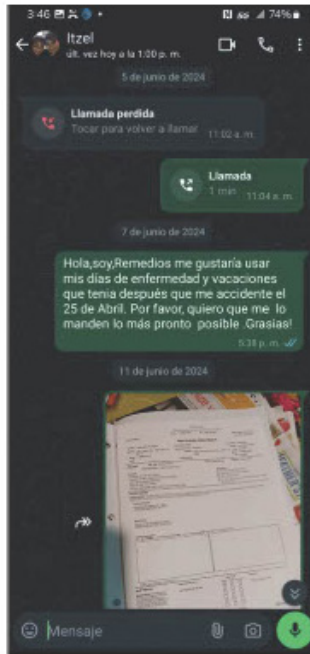


Image: 6/7/2024 I texted the manager Itzel asking to be paid immediately for my available paid sick leave and vacation pay since the accident 4/25/2024.

handing tools down to a coworker on the ladder below - an injury from which I have not yet recovered - and management has failed to pay me the 19 hrs of available paid sick leave and 54.69 hrs of available vacation that I am owed and have requested.

The text that I sent to store manager Itzel dated 6/7/2024 shows that I requested my available paid sick leave and vacation pay due to the workplace accident on 4/25/2024. The pay stub (below) dated 6/21/2024 shows that I have not been paid my available sick and vacation pay.

After the accident on 4/25/24, I was out of work with no income from paid sick leave, state disability or workers compensation for 7 weeks; I had to borrow money from friends and family to pay the rent, my wife and I are relying on food from the church, and my wife sells sweets on the street to help us get by. Management did not pay me my sick leave or vacation pay, or help me to access financial support from Workers Compensation or state disability income. I did not know I could request my available paid sick leave and vacation until a friend who is a leader in the CA Fast Food Workers Union urged me and my wife to talk with the Union and learn about my rights.

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When Remedios suffered a serious head injury because the broken metal door to the roof closed on his head, McDonald's management left him to drive himself home, without medical care; his wife took him to the hospital, and he missed seven weeks of work to recover. With no income, Remedios and his wife sold sweets on the street to get by. Source: Wage theft complaint filed with the Labor Commissioner's Office June 27, 2024.

FAST FOOD - CALOSHA - BURN INJURY - LACK OF FIRST AID - LACK OF TRAINING - RESPONSE REQUESTED

CalOSHA Los Angeles District Office
320 West 4th Street, Room 820 Los Angeles, CA 90013
Tel: (213) 576-7451 Fax: (213) 576-7461
Via email: DOSHLA@dir.ca.gov

August 21, 2025

RE: Subway, 8406 Lincoln Boulevard, Los Angeles CA 90045
Employer: S & R Subway Inc, 18200 Sheffield Ln, Northridge CA 91326

My name is Elizabeth Cruz and I work at the Subway at 9406 Lincoln Blvd in Los Angeles. I am writing this CalOSHA Complaint to report a burn accident at work.

On June 26, 2025, boiling water spilled on my foot, causing a second degree burn. I notified management but they failed to provide first aid or access to emergency care, so I did my best to protect my foot by covering it in oil and mustard and wrapping it in a napkin while I continued working for another hour. Burns are a common injury in fast food, and I have worked at this Subway for 18 years, but management never trained me on what to do in case of a burn.



This picture taken 6/26/2025 shows the second degree burn on my foot from an accident at work at Subway caused by boiling water

Immediately after the spill, I texted the manager a picture of my foot wrapped in the napkin and she said, "Oh Chona so you really hurt yourself," but she did not offer first-aid treatment or emergency medical care, or explain how to treat a burn injury. Instead, she blamed me for the accident and said that I should have been wearing better shoes, although I have worn these shoes to work for years and management never said anything about it. The manager asked me if I was going to go to the doctor and if so, to send her the paperwork, but she did not provide information about workers compensation or how to get treatment, or say that it would be paid for by the employer, so I kept working.

When I got home, I took off the napkin and noticed that the skin on my foot had bubbled up, so the next day I went to the emergency room. I did not tell the

Elizabeth, a Subway worker in Los Angeles, reported that management did not offer her first aid or medical care when her foot was burned by boiling water, and she was left to do her best with what could find, covering the burn with oil and mustard and wrapping it in a napkin while continuing to work. Source: Cal/OSHA complaint filed August 21, 2025.

FAST FOOD - WORKER HEALTH & SAFETY - EXCESSIVE HEAT - BURN INJURY (HOT OIL) - IMMINENT HAZARD - RESPONSE REQUESTED

CalOSHA, Modesto District Office, Eddie Miranda, District Manager
4206 Technology Drive, Ste. 3 Modesto, CA 95356
Phone: (209) 545-7310; Fax: (209) 545-7313

Via email: DOSHMOD@dir.ca.gov

July 31, 2024

RE: McDonald's, 13032 S Hwy 33 Santa Nella, CA 95322

Employer: John Abbate, CEO; James Abbate, Secretary; Sortino Corp.
140 Heron Way Merced, CA 95341

We are Celia Ibarra Guerrero and Emma Ramirez and we work at the McDonald's at 13032 S Hwy 33 in Santa Nella. We are writing this complaint because the kitchen in this McDonald's gets excessively hot on hot days, causing us and our coworkers to experience dizziness, nausea, headaches, weakness and shaking. Also, when Celia burned the length of her forearm with hot oil, management failed to provide adequate first aid (the manager gave her ice to put on the burn, which can make it worse) and did not inform her about her rights to workers compensation, so she worked through the pain with no medical care. CalOSHA has the authority to take action under the Heat Illness Prevention in Indoor Places of Employment regulation to protect us from excessive heat. Excessive heat is a workplace hazard at this location, and our employer can and should inform workers about this hazard, take steps to mitigate the hazard, and train us in safe practices.

On July 30, 2024 it was 94.5 degrees in the kitchen and Emma was preparing sandwiches and putting meat on the grill when she thought she was going to faint; she became so dizzy, weak and nauseated from the excessive heat that she had to steady herself against the wall, and her body started shaking and she got a terrible headache when she sat to drink water.

Images, left to right: (1) 94.5 degrees, kitchen, 11:15am 7/30/24; (2) 91.9 degrees, wall of kitchen, 3pm 7/29/24; (3) Burn from hot oil, 8/7/2023



When oil splashed on Celia's arm causing a burn the length of her arm, she told her manager she didn't want to go to the doctor because she couldn't afford it, and she was afraid management at the McDonald's where she worked would retaliate against her. Source: Cal/OSHA complaint filed July 31, 2024.

FAST FOOD - WORKER HEALTH & SAFETY - UNDERSTAFFING RESULTING IN HARM - REQUIRED TO WORK SICK - BLOCKED EGRESS - UNSAFE TAKING OUT GARBAGE ALONE IN DARK - IMMEDIATE HAZARD - RESPONSE REQUESTED

CalOSHA, David Rodriguez, Long Beach District Manager
1500 Hughes Way, Suite C-201, Long Beach CA 90810, Tel: 424 450-2630; Fax: 424 450-2675
Via email: DOSHLBO@dir.ca.gov

December 1, 2024

RE: Panera Bread, 5802 Firestone Blvd, South Gate CA 90280

Owner: Panera Inc, 1400 South Highway Drive Suite 100, Fenton MO 63026, (314) 984-1000

We are Rin Sanchez, Emily Howland, Sally Gomez, Gael Espinoza, Lilly Perez, Stephanie Neiro, Aiden Harris, Bibiana Gonzalez, Monica Sanchez, Joaquin Gonzalez, Marvin Aquino, and Miguel Meza and we work at the Panera Bread store located at 5802 Firestone Blvd in South Gate. Corporate management has imposed a requirement to cut labor hours by as much as 25 percent or more ("severe cuts" according to management). By deliberately understaffing our store, Panera has made our restaurant a dangerous place to work and is creating unsanitary conditions throughout the store. CalOSHA has the authority to take action under the Injury and Illness Prevention Program standard to require our employer to identify and mitigate workplace hazards and to implement an effective plan to prevent injury and illness.



Image: 11/7/2024, 1:10pm, Excessive workload and short staffing mean there is no time to take out the garbage, which piles up during the day, blocking the kitchen exit door, which is not safe. Workers are forced to take out the garbage alone after dark, which is against policy and also is not safe. Panera, 5802 Firestone Blvd, South Gate.

The understaffing is resulting in symptoms of extreme workplace stress, with at least 4 workers breaking down and crying and having panic attacks at work. Management also forces us to work sick as there is no one to cover for us, and often does not allow us to use our PTO when we are sick, including with: potentially-transmissible illnesses such as a lung infection and conjunctivitis; PMS and period pain; injuries; and when we need to care for sick immediate family members. Sally, for example, describes she has moments when she is so overwhelmed from working at 5 or 6 positions at once that she goes to the walk-in refrigerator and

Twelve Panera workers in South Gate reported being forced to work sick with vomiting and diarrhea, severe short-staffing resulting in mental health symptoms including panic attacks at work, blocked egress and other hazards. Source: Cal/OSHA complaint filed December 1, 2024.

FAST FOOD - WORKER HEALTH AND SAFETY - ROOF LEAKING (RAIN) - TERRIBLE ODORS FROM DRAINS, BLEACH - VIOLENT DISTURBANCES - IMMINENT HAZARD - RESPONSE REQUESTED

CalOSHA, Los Angeles District Office - Muhammad Zubair, District Manager
320 West 4th Street, Ste 820 Los Angeles, CA 90013, Phone: (510) 794-2521; Fax: (510) 794-3889
Via email: DOSHLA@dir.ca.gov

April 22, 2025

RE: Taco Bell, 4416 Sepulveda Blvd, Culver City CA 90230

Employer: Cotti Foods Corporation; Peter Capriotti II, CEO; Kimberly Matthews, Secretary;
Scott Miller, CFO; 29801 Santa Margarita Parkway, Rancho Santa Margarita CA 92688

We are Eulalia Miranda and Wilber Escobar, we work at the Taco Bell at 4416 Sepulveda Blvd, and we are writing this CalOSHA Complaint because management has failed to protect us from several hazards. When it rains outside, it also rains on us inside the store while we work on the line preparing burritos and tacos, soaking through our hats and visors and bouncing off our arms. Extremely disgusting odors from drain pipes at the burrito prep line (on hot days), the mop area (all the time) and the restroom

(occasionally) - causing us and our coworkers to get headaches and feel severely nauseated. Sometimes management pours bleach down the drains to stop the foul odors, but the strong bleach smell also causes Eulalia to get headaches. Also, there are ongoing violent and threatening incidents by customers and people in crisis, such as an angry customer who got upset about her order and chased a worker into the back, and a person in crisis who took off her clothes and refused to leave. We do not have sufficient training or security at the store to handle these situations.



9/6/24: This photo shows the stickers that our coworkers placed on the ceiling to try to block the water leaking through the ceiling

- **Rain leaking through roof in kitchen**

When it rains, water leaks through the ceiling and drips onto us while we prepare burritos and tacos on the preparation line in the kitchen, soaking through our hats and bouncing off our arms. Rain drips through the ceiling for hours, and by the end of the day our hats and visors are soaked, but we can't take them off because wearing them is mandatory.

1

Eulalia and Wilber reported that Taco Bell workers in Culver City put stickers on the ceiling tiles to try to stop the rain from falling onto them while working on the line preparing burritos and tacos. Source: Cal/OSHA complaint filed April 22, 2025.

FAST FOOD - WORKER HEALTH AND SAFETY - EXCESSIVE HEAT (BROKEN AC) - IMMINENT HAZARD - RESPONSE REQUESTED

CalOSHA, Fremont District Office
Kelly Tatum, District Manager
39141 Civic Center Dr. Suite 310
Fremont, CA 94538
Phone: (510) 794-2521
Fax: (510) 794-3889

Via email: DOSHfremont@dir.ca.gov

June 10, 2024

RE: McDonald's, 3221 S White Rd, San Jose CA 95148 - 3rd COMPLAINT
Previous Excessive Heat Complaints filed with CalOSHA 8/21/23 & 9/20/23

Owner: Cosme Fagundo, CEO, CFO, Secretary, Orsa Corp
711 Calle Artis, San Jose CA 95131

We are Josefina Ramos, Claudia Meza, Guillermina Calvo and Marisela Amezcua and we work at the McDonald's at 3221 S White Rd in San Jose. We are writing this complaint because for 9 days (from May 29-June 6, 2024) our employer subjected us to the hazard of excessive heat, with temperatures inside this McDonald's store reaching the 100s, and management did not take action to protect us from this hazard. The excessive heat caused Josefina to get a bad headache, a rash all over her skin, and to feel extremely nauseated - she was scared that if she started vomiting, she wouldn't be able to stop. Claudia also suffered symptoms of heat illness from the excessive heat, including headaches and excessive sweating. **We also worried about a coworker, she said her head hurt and her face got so red that she looked like a tomato - we were afraid she was going to faint on the grill.**



CalOSHA has the authority to take action under the Injury and Illness Prevention Program standard to hold our employer accountable when the AC breaks and it is excessively hot. Excessive heat is a workplace hazard at this location, and our employer can and should inform workers about this hazard, take steps to mitigate the hazard, and train us in safe practices.

This image shows the thermometer registered 101 degrees in the kitchen on Monday 6/3/24. On Thursday 6/6/24 the thermometer showed 98 degrees. We felt like we needed to do something, OSHA needed to come, we needed to go on strike, because when we told management it was too hot inside the store - over 100 degrees -and they said, "It is not hot." On Saturday June 1, 2024 management sent someone to check the AC and they said it was working, but they measured the temperature right where

1

Josefina, Guillermina and other coworkers filed a third excessive heat complaint with Cal/OSHA when temperature inside a McDonald's in San Jose reached triple digits – the workers described that one worker at the grill got so hot she said her head hurt and “her face got so red that she looked like a tomato”. Source: Cal/OSHA complaint filed June 10, 2024.

WORKER HEALTH & SAFETY COMPLAINT - EXCESSIVE HEAT - IMMINENT HAZARD - IMMEDIATE ACTION NEEDED - RESPONSE REQUESTED

CalOSHA

Joseph Crocker, Manager, Sacramento District Office

1750 Howe Ave Ste 430, Sacramento CA 95825

Phone: (916) 263-2800

Fax: (916) 263-2798

Via email: DOSHSAC@dir.ca.gov

June 14, 2024

RE: Popeyes, 8030 Greenback Ln, Citrus Heights CA 95610

**Owner: Charanjit S Ghai, CEO; Quikserve Cajun Inc
25 E Airway Blvd, Livermore CA 94551, (925) 292-8359**

We are Daisy Morales, Carlos Gomez, Ethel Peña, and Luis Saez and we work at the Popeyes at 8030 Greenback Lane in Citrus Heights. We are writing this complaint seeking immediate protection because we are being exposed to excessive heat and management is not taking necessary action to protect our health and safety. Excessive heat is a workplace hazard at this location, and our employer can and should inform workers about this hazard, take steps to mitigate the hazard, and train us in safe practices.



*Image: 6/5/2024, 5:30 PM,
93.6 degrees in the kitchen*

The AC has been broken since May 2024, temperatures in the kitchen are in the 90s, and management does not allow us to drink water to stay hydrated or use the restroom as needed.

The store was excessively hot on May 23, 2024 when Daisy, who is 5 months pregnant, was drinking water to stay hydrated and management screamed at her and sent her home early for using the restroom, threatening to call the police if she didn't leave right away. Management also sent Carlos home early as a punishment for drinking water on a day in early May when he was working in the excessively-hot kitchen.

We are experiencing symptoms of heat illness including excessive sweating and excessive fatigue. It is suffocating to work in the kitchen, especially in the back near the dishwashing and hot prep station where no fresh air reaches and where the hot water from the dishwashing area makes the whole space steamy and hot. There is a window but we don't open it because we are concerned about our safety. After the AC broke in May,

Daisy reported that when she was five months pregnant, management screamed at her, sent her home early and threatened to call the police on her if she did not leave right away because she had to use the restroom due to drinking water to stay hydrated when temperatures were in the 90s inside the Popeyes in Citrus Heights where she worked. Source: Cal/OSHA complaint filed June 14, 2024.

FAST FOOD - WORKER HEALTH & SAFETY - EXCESSIVE HEAT - VIOLENCE - IMMINENT HAZARD - RESPONSE REQUESTED

CalOSHA

Vacant, District Manager, Los Angeles District Office
320 West 4th Street Room 820, Los Angeles CA 90013
Tel: (213) 576-7451, Fax: (213) 576-7461

Via email: DOSHLA@dir.ca.gov

August 8, 2024

RE: Taco Bell, 2588 W Commonwealth Ave, Alhambra CA 91803

Employer: C&R Restaurant Group LP, 151 Kalmus Drive L5, Costa Mesa CA 92626
General Partner: Go Irish LLC, Brian Cox, Mark Reed, Manager/Member
151 Kalmus Drive Suite L5, Costa Mesa CA 922626

We are Samuel Lozano, Jeanpaul Arevalo, Martha Lopez and Shoshana Fatima Mojica and we work, or worked until recently, at the Taco Bell located at 2588 W Commonwealth Ave in Alhambra. We are filing this Complaint because management is failing to take action to protect us from the hazard of excessive heat, with temperatures reaching **104.5 degrees inside the store around noon on 8/4/2024 and workers experiencing symptoms of heat illness including headache, excessive sweating and feeling faint. Management is also failing to protect us from the hazard of workplace violence, with recent incidents on 3/10/24 when a customer tried to pass a fake \$100 bill and threatened to beat us if we didn't accept it, and on 6/23/24 at 6:59 am when a man pulled up to tag the drive-thru with graffiti.** We also frequently face customers who cause disturbances during the day and who come to the store from the nearby clubs drunk and high on drugs on Friday night and Saturday night and behave aggressively and demand to fight us. Management does not provide trained security and leaves the



This image was taken on 8/4/24 around 12 PM and shows that it was 104.5 degrees in the kitchen.

lobby open to customers until 3:30 am and 4:30 am when the store closes, saying they will fire us if we lock the lobby earlier.

On July 30, 2024 Martha felt the energy completely drain from her body and her skin and lips turned white from the heat, and another day she noticed another worker had similar symptoms. Management has us cool down in the walk-in refrigerator, but that is not a solution, and it does not feel safe to switch between extreme heat and extreme cold. We have asked management repeatedly to fix the AC, and they say they are fixing it, but it isn't fixed, and when it does get fixed it breaks again soon after.

With triple-digit temperatures in an Alhambra Taco Bell where she worked, Martha felt the energy completely drain from her body, and her skin and lips turned white from the heat. Source: Cal/OSHA complaint filed August 8, 2024.

FAST FOOD - WORKER HEALTH & SAFETY - EXCESSIVE HEAT (BROKEN AC) - IMMINENT HAZARD

CalOSHA, Sacramento District Office
 Joseph Crocker, District Manager
 1750 Howe Ave. Suite 430 Sacramento, CA 95825; Phone: (916) 263-2800
 VIA Email: DOSHSAC@dir.ca.gov

August 25, 2025

RE: Jack in the Box, 401 Blue Ravine Rd, Folsom CA 95630

Employer: Anil Yadav, CEO; Vanmel Inc.
 3550 Mowry Ave Suite 301, Fremont CA 94538, (510) 792-3393

My name is Sara Mejia and I work at the Jack in the Box at 401 Blue Ravine Rd in Folsom. I am writing this CalOSHA Complaint because the AC at this Jack in the Box store has been broken all summer, temperatures inside the store are in the 90s, I am suffering from symptoms of heat illness including nausea and headaches, and management has not taken the steps to protect us from the ongoing hazard of excessive indoor heat.

On August 9, 2025, I was working in the kitchen and the heat was almost too much to bear, giving me a bad headache around my forehead and causing me to feel nauseated. **The manager came into the kitchen and said, “it is hot, but it’s ok because we are going to lose weight,” and I replied, “I am not going to lose weight, I am going to pass out on this grill,” and she laughed and walked back to her office, where she has a fan.**



Around July 28, 2025, management put a sign on the front door saying the lobby is closed because the AC is broken.

The AC has been broken all summer, and the kitchen gets terribly hot from the heat of the fryers and grill. The district manager knows that it is too hot inside the store; he says he has reported the problem to the owners, but nothing changes.

I learned from the California Fast Food Workers Union that effective

At a Jack in the Box in Folsom, the AC broke and management closed the lobby but told workers in the kitchen, “it is hot, but it’s ok because we are going to lose weight.” When Sara replied, “I am not going to lose weight, I am going to pass out on this grill,” the manager laughed. Source: Cal/OSHA complaint filed August 25, 2025.

July 23, 2024 a new law was put in place to protect workers from the hazard of excessive heat at work. Management is not complying with this law. Management does not encourage us to drink water or take cool-down breaks, or provide a cool place to take these breaks, as required. Management has also not trained us on how to prevent, identify, or respond to heat illness symptoms. I have been working at this store for a year, and I have never received training on excessive heat.

In general, my coworkers and I do not receive health and safety training or other required trainings at this store. For example, on September 19, 2024, the manager texted me to do the sexual harassment training at home before returning to work the next day, but that she would do the other required training. At work the next day, I said I was not able to complete the sexual harassment training before coming to work, and the manager told me she would complete all me trainings, because they were too long. This is not ok.



September 19, 2024

Manager: Sara

Sara: yes

Manager: please can you watch the harassment video I need you to do it by tomorrow please

Ok

Sara: Ok

Manager: You do harassment and I will do the rest

This text from September 19, 2024 shows that the manager (Vanessa) texted me on Thursday, my day off, asking me to complete the sexual harassment video training at home before returning to work, and that she would do the other trainings for me. I was unable to complete the training at home, and at work Vanessa told me that she would complete all the trainings for me because they were too long.

Sara reported that management does not provide training on how to prevent heat illness, and that the manager completes workers' online training for them – sharing an example of a text from the manager: “you do harassment and I will do the rest”. Source: Cal/OSHA complaint filed August 25, 2025.

FAST FOOD - WORKER HEALTH & SAFETY - VIOLENCE - BURN HAZARDS - LACK OF PPE - FORCED TO WORK SICK (COVID, DIARRHEA) - FAILURE TO IMPLEMENT WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION PLAN - RETALIATION - IMMINENT HAZARD - RESPONSE REQUESTED

Cal/OSHA, Los Angeles District Office, District Manager (Vacant)
 320 West 4th St, Rm 820, Los Angeles CA 90013, Tel: 213 576-7451; Fax: 213 576-7461
 Via email: DOSHLA@dir.ca.gov

December 5, 2024

RE: Wingstop, 10850 Le Conte Ave, Los Angeles CA 90024

Owner: Far West Restaurant Group LLC, 1675 Scenic Ave Ste 150, Costa Mesa CA 92626
 Regina Cheung, CEO

We are Edgar Recinos, Erika Conner, Douglas Ruiz, Jeremias Mazariego Mejia, Almimar Castillo, and we work at the Wingstop located at 10850 Le Conte Ave in Los Angeles. Management at this Wingstop is risking our health and safety by failing to address known and ongoing hazards:

- Burn hazards - including being forced to clean the vent fans using a ladder over boiling oil, every week, without training or PPE; Please see image, below, and this video, which shows steam coming off the boiling oil in the fryers while a worker cleans above:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1i7j1BqFXhjmQxX_2j8EIlmrCLjULziM/view?usp=drive_link



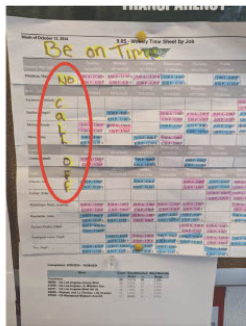
- Continuing to be forced to work sick or face retaliation - including with COVID (4/2024, 9/17/2024), diarrhea (1/9/24), and a respiratory infection (8/2024); and with "No Call Off" policies (most recently 10/27/2024), meaning there are weeks (such as when there are important football games) when we aren't allowed to call off at all, even if we are sick

- Abusive language and threats of violence from a manager; management does not take threats of workplace violence seriously - an assistant manager brought a gun to work openly drank alcohol during work, and threatened to harm worker if he filed another Complaint; and another manager whose husband came to Wingstop angry about his wife's affair with a cook, has created a potentially violent situation for cooks (ongoing).

Edgar is scared that he or one of his coworkers could fall in boiling oil, or injure our hands in the fan blades. Workers are ordered to clean the ventilation hoods every week by climbing on a step ladder and reaching over boiling oil, including cleaning the fan while the fan is running and the blades are exposed.

Management wants us to clean the hoods and the outsides of the fryers during working hours, while the fryers are running and the oil is boiling, we aren't allowed to wait until the oil cools, or clean in the morning before the oil starts boiling. We have not been trained on how to clean the hoods or the fryers safely, and we don't have appropriate PPE, such as gloves for heat protection, and protective eyewear.

We have complained to management that someone could fall into the boiling oil. We are also concerned that while we clean, the degreaser spray that we spray on the hood could settle into the cooking oil below.



Management forces us to work even if we are sick, and retaliates against us by cutting our hours if we miss work. In April 2024, management cut Erika's schedule after she missed just one day of work when she called off telling the manager that she felt sick and had tested positive for COVID. After she got sick with another respiratory infection on August 18, 2024, with symptoms including feeling sick, coughing and her throat swelling up, management cut Erika's schedule again for over a month. Several times management has written "No Call Off" on the schedules, which means we are not allowed to miss work during that time, even if we are sick. Edgar was ordered to come to work while sick with diarrhea (January 2024) and after testing positive for COVID and with symptoms including cough and fever (September 17, 2024).



Through all this, when we raise safety issues to management or refuse to work sick, management retaliates against us by cutting our work hours. Management tells us they have to cut our hours because sales are low, yet there is always a sign up that says Wingstop is hiring. Edgar has had his hours cut by around 30% since he started speaking up about health and safety and writing complaints to management.

Management has also neglected to take action to protect us from abusive treatment and threats by a manager. An assistant manager used vulgar and offensive language toward us for many months, with statements like, "Stop standing around like a bunch of penises," and when we would complain to him, he would say that we should be appreciative that he treats us so well because when he was first learning to work in restaurants, the manager would hit him in the head as punishment. After Edgar complained about this behavior to management, the store manager and the district manager

Above: Schedule says "No Call Off," which means we have to come to work, even if we are sick.
 Below: Sign says the store is hiring.

Wingstop workers in Los Angeles reported being forced to work sick, and that management would write "no call off" on the schedule for certain days when a lot of orders were expected, for example for important football games, requiring workers come in to work on those days even if sick. Workers also reported burn hazards, including being forced to lean on a ladder over boiling oil to clean vent hoods with fryers in use; and threats of violence from an assistant manager who openly drank alcohol at work, brought a gun to work and threatened to harm a worker if he filed a Complaint. Source: Cal/OSHA complaint filed December 5, 2024.

FAST FOOD - WORKER HEALTH & SAFETY - VIOLENCE - GAS LEAK - ELECTROCUTION HAZARD - SEWER DRAIN BACKUPS - SEWER GAS EXPOSURE - EXCESSIVE HEAT (AC DOESN'T WORK IN KITCHEN) - BURNS - LACK OF PPE (GLOVES) - IMMINENT HAZARD - RESPONSE REQUESTED

Cal/OSHA - Wendy Hogle-Lui, Oakland District Manager
 1515 Clay Street, Suite 1303, Oakland, CA 94612, Tel: (510) 622-2916; Fax: (510) 622-2908
 Via email: DOSHOAK@dir.ca.gov

May 30, 2024

RE: **Taco Bell, 3535 35th Ave, Oakland CA 94619**

Employer: SG Elison, Manager/Member, Golden Gate Bell LLC, Diversified Restaurant Group
 465 First Street West, 2nd Fl, Sonoma CA 95476, 702-880-5818

We are Rene Diaz and Dimir Tejada and we work at the Taco Bell located at 3535 35th Ave in Oakland. We are writing this letter to provide additional information about the unsafe working conditions we reported in our call to Cal/OSHA on May 29, 2024.

HEALTH & SAFETY HAZARDS

Every day and every night we face life-threatening hazards working at this Taco Bell. For 2 months, there has been a strong smell of gas around the fryer and the rethermalizer, a device used to reheat food. For 2 weeks, there is an electric cable with bare wires in the kitchen creating an electrocution hazard, with only some stickers we placed on the bare wires for insulation. We suffer symptoms of heat illness including headache and excessive sweating from excessive heat working at the grill and the fryer because the AC is not working effectively in the kitchen, and the manager only gives us tiny cups of water. For over a year, we have been exposed to sewer gas and sewer water from clogged sewers including from floor drains in the kitchen and by the soda machine, at the hand-washing sink and in the restroom. We have burn scars on our arms from being up to our elbows cleaning hot appliances without PPE (long gloves), and without training on burn prevention or how to work with strong chemicals, and there is no first aid kit to treat the burns.



We didn't know there was anything we could do about these problems until we started talking with the CA Fast Food Workers Union and learned we could notify Cal/OSHA that we need immediate protection from life-threatening hazards.

Image: Electrocution hazard - we put stickers to cover the bare wires that run from the touch screen across the cheese-melting machine.

1

VIOLENCE

Violence from angry customers, robberies and physical abuse from a manager are ongoing at this Taco Bell. We thought we had to risk our lives over an 80-cent side of sauce or a soda, but after we talked with the CA Fast Food Workers Union, we learned that management is required to identify known violence hazards, like confrontations with customers over food items, and develop an effective plan to protect us and train us on the plan; and that if we are unsafe at work, we can seek help from Cal/OSHA.

Some recent violent incidents at this Taco Bell include:

- 3 robberies during a 2-week period in February 2024: Twice people jumped the counter to steal the cash registers while our coworkers were working. On 2/21/2024, a pick-up truck drove into the store and stole the safe. Since the safe was stolen, the store provides a security guard starting at 3am to protect the money while the store is closed, but they don't provide a security guard to protect us while we are working.



- 12/3/23 attack at drive-thru window: Rene suffers anxiety and PTSD from a violent incident when he was punched in the chest through the drive-thru window by a man who became angry that we told his friend that she had to pay for sour cream (see image).

These photos show we have lots of scars from burns on our arms from cleaning the grill and other appliances without PPE (long gloves).



5

The man who hit Rene in the chest broke the drive-thru window in the attack.



4

Rene and Dimir learned about their rights and filed a Cal/OSHA complaint documenting life-threatening violence, electrocution hazards, a gas leak, sewer drain flooding, burns, excessive heat and other hazards at a Taco Bell in Oakland. Source: Cal/OSHA complaint filed May 30, 2024.

STATEMENT OF CARMEN PONCE

I've been working at this El Pollo Loco store for 2 years. I started working as a cashier in the mornings, but a year ago management promoted me to shift leader and moved me to the late shift. Since then I have experienced much more violence at work. Most recently, around 5:30pm one evening at the end of January I was transferring money from the register at the front to the office when a man came into the store, jumped onto the counter and tried to rip the register from the counter. I was worried that he would see I had money, so I tried to hide. One of the cooks came out of the kitchen and confronted the man, and he ran off.

This was the second time someone tried to steal the cash register from the counter in just one month. It had happened ten days before as well. I wasn't working that day, but I saw photos of the security footage posted in a group chat with other employees. On another day around the same time someone succeeded in stealing the cash register through the drive-thru window. They were able to steal the register because the lock on the window is broken. Management instructed us to keep the window secure by wedging a large spoon under the window latch (see photo below). I cannot believe that the theft happened in January and management has still not fixed the lock.



Spoon wedged under broken lock in drive-thru window

3

In a May 2, 2024 complaint to Cal/OSHA, Carmen and Erica reported multiple robberies at El Pollo Loco in Oakland - including that someone entered the store and put a gun to a worker's head, and that management told them to "lock" the drive-thru window with a spoon. Source: Cal/OSHA complaint filed May 4, 2024.

FAST FOOD - ONGOING VIOLENCE - IMMINENT HAZARD - RESPONSE REQUESTED

CalOSHA, Vacant, Los Angeles District Manager
320 W 4th St Room 820, Los Angeles CA 90013, Tel: 213 576-7451; Fax: 213 576-7461
Via email: DOSHLA@dir.ca.gov

November 22, 2024

RE: Subway, 1013 S Alvarado St, Los Angeles 90006

Owner: Robert Tchobanian, CEO; RT Sourcing Inc.; 456 W Stocker St, Glendale CA 91202
Manouk Tchobanian, CEO, CFO; Margarita Epshteyn, Secretary; Nuki Sub, Inc
456 W Stocker St A, Glendale CA 91202

My name is Estela Flores and I have worked at the Subway at 1013 S Alvarado St in Los Angeles for 15 years, and I have also been working at other locations owned by this franchise, including the 1400 W Pico Blvd, Los Angeles store. I am filing this CalOSHA Complaint because management is not taking



10/2/24: Image of aftermath of attack, Subway, 1013 S Alvarado St, Los Angeles

necessary action to protect me and my coworkers from the ongoing hazard of workplace violence, and I am seeking implementation of the new Workplace Violence Prevention law.

Most recently, on October 3, 2024, I was attacked by a man who threw 6 heavy metal chairs and a cash register at me. Over the past year I was threatened twice by men with knives. A man who wanted a free soda cursed at me, called me a bitch and pulled out a knife; and another man threatened me with a knife when I took out the garbage. In May 2024 at the 1400 W Pico Subway store, a man demanded a free sandwich, cursed at me saying "Fuck you, bitch," threw things at me and laid down on the floor refusing to leave. Every single day we face hostile customers and they make threats including saying things like "Shut up old lady I'm going to kill you, I'm going to wring your neck." We often work alone. We haven't been trained on what to do in these situations, and there is no store phone or button to call the police.

On October 3, 2024 at 7:15 AM, I was working alone when a man threw 6 heavy metal chairs, the computer and the cash register over the counter at me and I had to run for my life. There is no phone in the store so I grabbed my cell

Estela reported ongoing violent incidents at a Subway in Los Angeles including an attack by a man who threw six heavy metal chairs and a cash register at her, two separate incidents of being threatened with knives, and threats from customers making statements including: "Shut up old lady I'm going to kill you, I'm going to wring your neck." Source: Cal/OSHA complaint filed November 22, 2024.

FAST FOOD - WORKER HEALTH AND SAFETY - VIOLENCE (ONGOING) - ROBBERIES - KNIFE ASSAULT - DOOR LOCK BROKEN (FOR OVER A YEAR) - IMMEDIATE HAZARD - RESPONSE REQUESTED

CalOSHA, Sacramento District Office; Joseph Crocker, District Manager
1750 Howe Ave Suite 430, Sacramento CA 95825; Phone: (916) 263-2800

Via Email: DOSHSAC@dir.ca.gov

August 27, 2025

RE: **Jack in the Box, 10699 Folsom Blvd, Rancho Cordova CA 95670**

Owner: **Anil Yadav, Vanmel Inc, 3550 Mowry Ave Suite 301, Fremont CA 94538, 510 792-3393**

We are Ana Mejia and Carla Mejia and we work at the Jack in the Box at 10699 Folsom Blvd in Rancho Cordova. We are writing this CalOSHA Complaint because violent incidents are frequent and ongoing at this store, including: (1) 8/21/2025: a coworker told us someone came into the store with a pistol; (2) 8/20/2025: another coworker told us they closed the lobby early around 8pm because he saw that same man with a pistol, with another man, at the store; (3) 7/30/2025: after a cash register robbery at the front counter, management responded by blaming workers for not stopping the robbery and protecting the cash register; (4) 8/13/2025: another cash register robbery happened at the drive-thru; (5) March 2025: there was a knife assault in which Carla asked management to call 911 because of a violent customer who had been in the store yelling sexual profanities for hours, the manager said no, and the customer proceeded to pull out a knife and try to slit Carla's throat—Carla had to call 911 by herself because management did not do so; (6) Nov 2024: an angry man came into the kitchen work area through an unlocked door, where the lock has been broken for over a year—the lock remains broken



7/30/2025: Screenshot from store's security tape shows a man stealing the cash register off the counter.

today; (7) Dec 2024: when Carla reported an incident in which a man threw a box at her, the manager responded that she had laughed when she saw the video; (8) an angry customer threw a soda at Ana; and (9) other recent violence in front of the store, including a knife fight a month or two ago where we worried someone would get killed, an incident in March when a man punched a manager in the face, and also a killing in front of the nearby Dollar Tree store. On Friday and

Carla asked management at a Jack in the Box in Rancho Cordova to call 911 about a man who yelled sexual profanities for hours – the manager said no, and Carla had to call 911 herself when the man pulled out a knife and tried to slit her throat. Source: Cal/OSHA complaint filed August 27, 2025.

Wage Theft

Employers' refusal to pay sick leave, overtime avoidance schemes, off-the-clock work, bounced paychecks and cash pay are among the most common forms of wage theft that rob fast food workers of millions of dollars in income each year – money we need to feed our families and pay for rent and bills.

New Research

In a 2025 Research Brief, researchers at Rutgers and Northwestern University report wage theft has risen sharply in fast food restaurants, finding that 25% of fast food workers in Los Angeles are illegally paid below the minimum wage. **The researchers found minimum wage violations cost the average victim nearly \$3500 and total \$44 million in lost wages annually across the region.**⁸³


The researchers also found that a bigger share of fast food workers in Los Angeles experienced minimum wage violations than in any other industry analyzed, and that most fast food workers never complain, in part, because they don't know their rights.

Worker Voices

Recent complaints filed with the CA Labor Commissioner's Office describe wage theft and its impact on fast food workers and our families.

Workers often report being denied their paid sick leave. Six workers at El Pollo Loco in Oakland reported lack of paid sick leave, including one worker, who was hit by a stray bullet that entered his home. In the complaint, the worker stated: **“The doctor told me to stay off my foot, but I went straight back to work at El Pollo Loco, bleeding from the bullet hole in my ankle and in pain, because we don't have paid sick leave, and I didn't know about CA state disability insurance.”**⁸⁴

Estela reported that Subway management denied her paid sick leave when she missed work one Sunday because she went to the eye doctor, even after providing a receipt from the clinic and prescription to prove she had been to the doctor.⁸⁵ Her employer refused to pay for the scheduled day of work she missed, texting her that “All clinics closed on Sundays”. Estela also learned about meal and rest breaks, and realized that she was entitled to breaks that she wasn't able to take for most of the 15 years she had been working for Subway because she often worked alone, with no one to cover for her.



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RESEARCH BRIEF | FEB 2025

Wage Theft in the Fast Food Industry: Minimum Wage Violations in Los Angeles

Key Findings:

- More and more LA-area fast food workers are experiencing minimum wage violations. One in four fast food workers were paid below the minimum wage in 2024. That's *eight times* the 3 percent rate in 2009.
- A bigger share of LA-area fast food workers experience this form of wage theft than any of the other industries we analyzed – restaurants (not fast food); health care support; retail; and transportation/warehousing.
- Fast food workers in the LA area lose almost \$3,500 a year – about 16 percent of their income – because employers are paying them below the minimum wage. That adds up to over a quarter of a billion dollars in the last six years.


Since 2016, the minimum wage in California has grown from \$10 per hour to \$16.50 today; in the city of Los Angeles, the minimum wage has grown from \$10 per hour to \$17.28 per hour. Studies have shown that these increases have produced significant [wage growth](#) for California workers, had minimal effects on [employment](#), led to minor increases in [prices](#), and generated valuable [revenue](#) for the state.

Statutory minimum wage increases, however, do not guarantee that workers will collect the full amount they have earned and to which they are legally entitled. A recent study found that over [\\$1.5 billion](#) in unpaid wages were recovered by state and federal authorities between 2021 and 2023 through enforcement and litigation. This figure represents only the

tip of the iceberg, however, as [most instances](#) of wage theft still go [unreported](#).

This research brief uses survey data to examine underlying rates of wage theft in the fast food industry in greater Los Angeles.¹

We find that a growing number of fast food workers are experiencing minimum wage violations; a higher share of fast food workers suffer this form of wage theft than workers in comparable industries; and the losses fast food workers incur are significant (16% of their income). With [88 percent](#) of fast food workers lacking full knowledge of basic workplace rights, these findings underscore the need for mandatory third-party “know your rights” trainings as [recently proposed](#) to the Los Angeles City Council.



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Daniel J. Galvin
Northwestern University
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Jake Barnes
Rutgers University
jacob.barnes@rutgers.edu

FAST FOOD - WAGE THEFT - WAGE CLAIMS - OFF-THE-CLOCK WORK - MEAL AND REST BREAKS - RESPONSE REQUESTED

CA Labor Commissioner's Office, Oakland
 1515 Clay Street Ste 801, Oakland CA 94612, (510) 622-3273
 Via email: LaborComm.WCA.OAK@dir.ca.gov

June 27, 2025

RE: Burger King, 4200 International Blvd, Oakland CA 94601
 Wage claim, attached

Owner: Moraga Emerald, Inc.; Keita A. Grant, CEO, Secretary, CFO;
 161 Shady Lane, Walnut Creek CA 94597

My name is Sergio Ceja Cuamba and I work at the Burger King at 4200 International Blvd in Oakland. I am **writing this Wage Theft Complaint because management at this Burger King required me to work off the clock multiple times per week for over a year, totalling 50 hours of unpaid work.** Management also made me take all my breaks at once, at the beginning of my shifts, leaving me completely exhausted after working 7 hours straight with no breaks. I told Beatriz, the assistant manager, that I was really tired at the end of my shift and asked why I wasn't allowed to take my breaks on time, and she told me that it was so they did not have to hire more workers to cover our breaks. In December 2024, after talking with management for nearly a year about not getting paid for my work and not being able to take breaks, I told the managers that I was going to talk with HR about it, and they started paying me for my off-the-clock work and giving me my breaks, but they never paid me the backpay I am owed. On March 26, 2025, I talked with Beatriz, the assistant manager, about getting paid for having to work through a break that day, and she said I would be paid a missed break premium, but that if I sued or talked to someone about the wage theft at the store that I would only be hurting my coworkers, because the owner would shut down the store. This is not right - I should be paid for my work and be allowed to take my breaks on time, and I should not have to fear retaliation if I speak up about management violating my rights.

In December 2023, management started telling me to clock out at the end of my shift and keep working for an extra 20 minutes, completely unpaid. This occurred every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday because on those days the store is very busy and short staffed. **Working off-the-clock felt wrong, but I didn't know it was illegal and that I had a right to be paid for the time that I worked until I spoke to a coworker involved with the union in January 2024.** Learning about my rights from my coworker made me feel angry and upset, and I decided that I had to stand up for myself and ask to be paid for the time that I was told to work off-the-clock.

In January 2024 I spoke to the managers, Manuel and Maria, about getting paid for all the time I was working off-the-clock, and they responded that they knew that telling me to work off-the-clock unpaid

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Management at Carl's Jr. refused to pay Teresa her paid sick leave when she missed 3 days of work for a medical procedure in 2023 and two days of work when she had partial facial paralysis (Bell's palsy) in 2024.⁸⁶ In 2025, management again denied her paid sick leave when she missed two scheduled shifts of work to be with her brother while he was dying and to mourn. "I cannot afford to take unpaid time off work. I am behind on rent and the electricity bills, and I need to be able to take my sick time without fearing that I won't be able to pay my rent," stated Teresa, in her Wage Theft complaint.

Management also skimmed 21 hours from Teresa's paycheck dated 8/18/2025. When she noticed the hours were missing, she texted the manager about it and he said she would get paid on her next check, but she wasn't.

Sergio described working unpaid, off-the-clock at a Burger King in Oakland.⁸⁷ **"Working off-the-clock felt wrong, but I didn't know it was illegal and that I had a right to be paid for the time that I worked until I spoke to a coworker involved with the union in January 2024."**

Liliana and her son were evicted after her paychecks bounced and then she was not paid at all for several pay periods. Management also wrongfully denied Liliana paid sick leave when she missed a day of work to bury her husband, who had recently passed away, and fired her a week after she made the paid sick leave request.

Cesar also reported working off-the-clock for thousands of hours, not knowing he had a right to be paid for all hours worked. Working alone on the closing shift at a Subway store in downtown Los Angeles, Cesar described his experience:⁸⁸

“For 5 years, after I clocked out, I kept working unpaid, off the clock, cleaning the whole store. I cleaned the proofer, the toaster, the oven, the microwave, the counter bin, the cutting boards, underneath the cutting boards, the sneeze guards, the fountain drink area, the glass on the cooler, around the cooler, the tables, the chairs, the back door, the entrance, the walls, the toilet, and the sink. I took out the trash and put in new trash bags. I cleaned the walk-in freezer where we store food. I washed the dishes and trays. I swept and mopped. I also dealt with the tables and the chairs outside.

I worked like that, cleaning the store at night after I punched out – totaling thousands of hours of unpaid work, off-the-clock – until a Union organizer came to the store in September 2025 and told me that I don’t have to work for free, I have a right to get paid for my work, and now I am filing a lawsuit for the back wages I am owed. I am hoping this will help me pay off the debt I am in for dental work that I needed, and to be able to afford to eat regular meals.”

December 8, 2025

To: Councilmember Ysabel J. Jurado - HAND DELIVERY

Dear Councilmember Jurado,

My name is Cesar Lopez and I work at Subway at 1000 S. Hope Street in your district. Across Los Angeles, fast food workers are calling on city leaders to take immediate action to pass the Fast Food Fair Work law, which will provide us with essential training and support to address the abuses, hazards, and violations we face on the job every day. Experiences like mine show how urgently this law is needed.

I work the closing shift alone at Subway. For 5 years, after I clocked out, I kept working unpaid, off the clock, cleaning the whole store. I cleaned the proofer, the toaster, the oven, the microwave, the counter bin, the cutting boards, underneath the cutting boards, the sneeze guards, the fountain drink area, the glass on the cooler, around the cooler, the tables, the chairs, the back door, the entrance, the walls, the toilet, and the sink. I took out the trash and put in new trash bags. I cleaned the walk-in freezer where we store food. I washed the dishes and trays. I swept and mopped. I also dealt with the tables and the chairs outside. When I came in to work on days when I didn’t work the night before, the store looked dirty. I think they didn’t worry about cleaning when I wasn’t there, because they knew that I was going to do the cleaning.

I worked like that, cleaning the store at night after I punched out – totaling thousands of hours of unpaid work, off-the-clock – until a Union organizer came to the store in September 2025 and told me that I don’t have to work for free, I have a right to get paid for my work, and now I am filing a lawsuit for the back wages I am owed. I am hoping this will help me pay off the debt I am in for dental work that I needed, and to be able to afford to eat regular meals.

Experiences like mine are common across our city. Los Angeles fast food workers face wage theft, sexual harassment, discrimination, and hazards like violence, extreme heat, rat infestations, sewage flooding and more. Employers pressure us to come to work sick, and violate our rights to paid time off work to recover from childbirth and bond with a newborn. We often face retaliation for reporting these problems, including threats by our employers to call ICE. Many of us live in poverty and struggle to keep our families housed. Unpredictable schedules, sudden hours cuts, and unfair and retaliatory firings all contribute to the instability that put many Los Angeles fast food workers on the brink of homelessness. As the Trump administration wages attacks on immigrant communities and workplace protections alike, the threat of abuses against vulnerable workers increases.

The Fast Food Fair Work law will provide urgently-needed training to ensure fast food workers know our rights and are empowered to uphold them, and provide us access to essential benefits, programs and resources put in place to protect and support workers like us. This law will also require paid time off so fast food workers can attend the training and take care of our personal and family needs, and will promote stability by safeguarding us against abusive scheduling practices. With your support, the Fast Food Fair Work law will improve conditions and quality of life for over 50,000 fast food workers and help to protect and strengthen families and communities across our city at this critical time.

Thank you for your leadership in ensuring the passage of this vital legislation.

To: City of Oakland, Labor Standards Division
 250 Frank Ogawa Plaza 3rd Fl Ste 3341, Oakland CA 94612; (510) 238-6258
 Via email: minwageinfo@oaklandca.gov

CC: Barbara J Parker, Oakland City Attorney
 1 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza, 6th Floor, Oakland, CA 94612; (510) 238-3601
 Via email: bjparker@oaklandcityattorney.org

November 27, 2024

RE: El Pollo Loco, 2506 International Blvd, Oakland CA 94601
 Paid sick leave violations, City of Oakland

Owner: Joseph N Rubin, CEO, Coastal Valley Enterprises
 400 Santa Clara St, Ste 206 Vallejo, CA 94590

We are Erica Cruz, Enrique Olivas, Leodegario Bibiano, Carmen Ponce, Luis Antonio Sierra Ramos, and Sophia Lopez and we work at El Pollo Loco at 2506 International Blvd in Oakland. We are writing this Paid Sick Leave Complaint because we and our coworkers are not allowed to accrue and use 72 hours of sick time as mandated by the Oakland Paid Sick Leave Ordinance, and we do not have required paid sick leave information on our pay stubs.



In July 2024, a stray bullet hit Luis's foot. Management did not pay him paid sick leave for the 2 weeks of work that he missed, and did not tell him about his rights to Disability Income.

In July 2024, a stray bullet from a shooting across the street entered Luis's home, hitting him in the foot. The doctor told him to stay off his feet so the injury could heal, but he kept working for 2 weeks, in pain and bleeding, with the bullet still lodged in his foot, because we don't have sick pay, and management didn't tell Luis about his rights to income from State Disability Insurance. The doctor told Luis to stay home for a month, but he only stayed home for 2 weeks because he had no income, he had to borrow money from friends to pay his rent and send his wife and 4-year-old daughter to live with his in-laws because without paid sick leave or disability income, he couldn't support them.

In January 2024, Erica suffered from a Repetitive Motion Injury at work, from working constantly at the burrito station without being able to rotate positions or take rest breaks. Erica needs the 72 hours of paid sick leave to stay home and rest in order to recover, but she can't afford to stay home without pay. Erica only learned that she was supposed to have 72 hours of available paid sick time after she went to a Know Your Rights meeting

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STATEMENT OF LUIS ANTONIO SIERRA

My name is Luis Antonio Sierra and I have been working at El Pollo Loco at 2506 International Blvd in Oakland for over a year. When I started working at this El Pollo Loco, I asked the store manager Evelyn about sick pay and she told me that El Pollo Loco doesn't have sick pay; I told her that I used to work for a big company doing flood restoration and I had sick pay there, and she told me that fast food restaurants are different and I didn't know what I was talking about and she said, "There is no sick pay in fast food."

When my coworkers and I ask about sick pay, Evelyn always says, "Here we don't have sick pay. If you don't want to work, don't work," that is her way of saying that we have to work no matter what or we will lose our jobs.

In spring 2024 I experienced preinfarction (chest pain that precedes heart attack) on a day I was scheduled to work, so I called Evelyn, the store manager, from the ambulance to tell her that I was going to miss work because I was going to the hospital and she said to me, "No, you just don't want to work," so I had to pass the phone to the EMT to prove that I was in an ambulance. I remember the EMT told me "Don't worry about your job, worry about your health," and I said, "But I am going to end up with no job." I didn't ask for sick pay when I missed work that day because I knew I wouldn't get it.

In July 2024 a stray bullet from a shooting across the street entered my home and struck my ankle, all of a sudden I realized that I was in pain and bleeding. I went to Highland Hospital and then to La Clinica and they told me that the bullet was surrounded by nerves and also that my blood sugar levels were high and so I needed to let the wound heal with the bullet inside my ankle, and improve my blood sugar control, and then they can evaluate if it is possible to remove the bullet surgically. The bullet is still in my ankle (11/24/24), I don't know yet if they will be able to remove it.



The doctor told me to stay off my foot, but I went straight back to work at El Pollo Loco, bleeding from the bullet hole in my ankle and in pain, because we don't have paid sick leave, and I didn't know about CA state disability insurance. When I told Evelyn, the store manager, about the bullet in my ankle, she was dismissive of my need for

paid time off to heal, saying that her husband also has a bullet that the doctors didn't take out, and it isn't a problem. Management didn't provide me with any information about paid sick leave or disability insurance that could have supported me and my family while I recovered, nor about my rights to job-protected leave under state and federal laws. I didn't know that I had a right to 72 hours of paid sick

Six workers at El Pollo Loco in Oakland reported lack of paid sick leave, including a worker who was hit by a stray bullet that entered his home: "The doctor told me to stay off my foot, but I went straight back to work at El Pollo Loco, bleeding from the bullet hole in my ankle and in pain, because we don't have paid sick leave, and I didn't know about CA state disability insurance." Source: Wage theft complaint filed with the City of Oakland Labor Standards Division November 27, 2024.

FAST FOOD - WAGE THEFT - PAID SICK LEAVE - MEAL BREAKS - REST BREAKS - RESPONSE REQUESTED

Labor Commissioner's Office DLSE - Wage Claims
320 W 4th St, Ste 450, Los Angeles CA 90013, 213 620-6330
Via email: LaborComm.WCA.LAO@dir.ca.gov

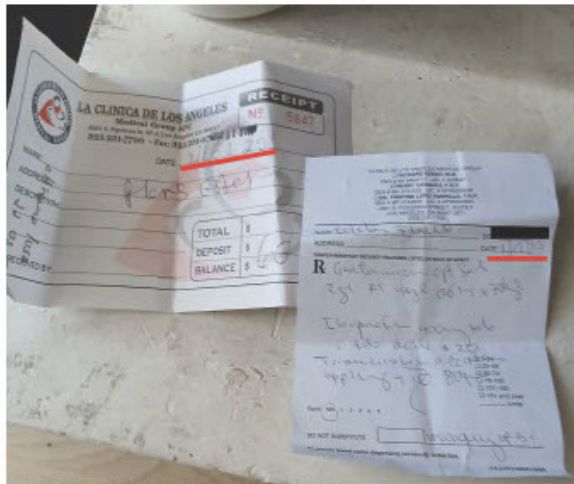
June 13, 2025

RE: Subway, 1013 S Alvarado St, Los Angeles 90006
Wage Claim, attached

Owner: RT Sourcing Inc: Robert Tchobanian, CEO; 456 W Stocker St, Glendale CA 91202
Nuki Sub, Inc.: Manouk Tchobanian, CEO, CFO; Margarita Epshteyn, Secretary Inc
456 W Stocker St A, Glendale CA 91202

My name is Estela Flores and I work at the Subway at 1013 S Alvarado in Los Angeles. I am writing this Wage Theft Complaint after learning that certain of my rights at work have been violated for many years. I reached out to the California Fast Food Workers Union when the owner of my Subway refused to pay a sick day I am owed, and I learned that I also should have been able to take meal breaks and rest breaks, and that I can file a Wage Claim to recover what I am owed. For most of the 15 years that I have worked for Subway, I rarely was able to take 10-minute rest breaks, because there was no one to cover me and I often worked alone, and I also often I couldn't take meal breaks, or my meal breaks were interrupted, because I had to attend to the customers.

The owner of this Subway refuses to pay the sick pay I requested and am owed for the scheduled day of work that I missed on Sunday March 16, 2025 when I went to La Clinica de Los Angeles for a bad headache and a burst blood vessel in my right eye. I asked for my sick pay and I sent the owner documents showing I had been seen at the health clinic on Sunday March 16 and again on Monday March 17, when they gave me a prescription, and she responded "all clinic closed on Sunday" and she didn't pay me.



For most of the time that I have worked at Subway, I didn't know about my rights or what I could do about problems at work. After a violent incident on October 3, 2024, when a man threw 6 metal chairs at me and threatened to wring my neck, I remembered

that I had a card with a phone number from the California Fast Food Workers Union. I called and learned

In a Wage Theft complaint at a Subway in Los Angeles, Estela described: "I asked for my sick pay and I sent the owner documents showing I had been seen at the health clinic on Sunday March 16 and again on Monday March 17, when they gave me a prescription, and she responded "all clinic closed on Sunday" and she didn't pay me." Source: Wage theft complaint filed with the Labor Commissioner's Office June 13, 2025.

FAST FOOD - WAGE THEFT - UNPAID WAGES - LACK OF PAID SICK LEAVE - RESPONSE REQUESTED

DLSE-Wage Claims, Labor Commissioner's Office, Van Nuys
6150 Van Nuys Blvd Rm 206, Van Nuys CA 91401, (818) 901-5315

Via email: LaborComm.WCA.VNO@dir.ca.gov

October 6, 2025

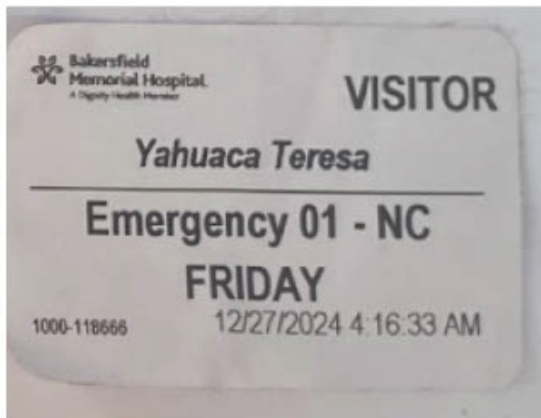
RE: Carl's Jr, 11509 Laurel Canyon Blvd, San Fernando CA 91340
Wage Claim, attached

Owner: Harshad Dharod, CEO, Sun Gir Inc, 1 Centerpointe Dr Suite 400, La Palma CA 90623

My name is Teresa Yahuaca, I work at the Carl's Jr at 11509 Laurel Canyon Blvd in San Fernando.

I am filing this Wage Theft Complaint and Wage Claim because management at this Carl's Jr. still isn't paying paid sick leave at this store, and they also cheated me out of my pay for 21 hours that I worked in July and August 2025. I previously filed a Wage Theft Complaint and Wage Claim on July 19, 2024 because management failed to pay my paid sick leave in 2023 when I missed 3 days of work for a medical procedure, and in 2024 when I missed 2 days of work due to partial facial paralysis (Bell's Palsy), and for other wage theft violations. I have talked with 3 different managers about trying to get paid, but I still haven't been paid.

I am filing this new Wage Theft Complaint and Wage Claim because in the days after Christmas I missed 2 shifts of scheduled work to care for and be with my brother at the hospital as he was dying, and to mourn, but management has not paid me my available paid sick leave, as required.



Visitor Sticker dated 12/27/24 shows that Teresa Yahuaca was a visitor at the Bakersfield Memorial Hospital.

In California, Paid Sick Leave can be used to care for a sibling who is sick, and to mourn the passing of a sibling. I provided documentation to management proving that I was in the hospital with my brother at the time, and when I saw that I didn't receive my available paid sick leave, I called the manager and left a message for him asking to be paid, but over 6 months have passed and I still have not been paid.

I cannot afford to take unpaid time off work. I am behind on rent and the electricity bills, and I need to be able to take my sick time without fearing that I won't be able to pay my rent.

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Management at Carl's Jr. refused to pay Teresa's paid sick leave when she missed three days of work for a medical procedure in 2023, and again in 2024 when she missed two days of work when she had partial facial paralysis (Bell's palsy), and again in 2025, when she missed two scheduled shifts to be with her brother while he was dying and to mourn. Source: Wage theft complaint filed with the Labor Commissioner's Office October 6, 2025.

FAST FOOD - WAGE THEFT - BOUNCED PAYCHECKS - LATE PAYMENT OF WAGES - CASH PAY - RESPONSE REQUESTED

Labor Commissioner’s Office, DLSE - Wage Claims
1500 Hughes Way, Suite C-202, Long Beach CA 90810, 562 590-5084
VIA EMAIL: LaborComm.WCA.LBO@dir.ca.gov

December 5, 2025

RE: Subway, 8406 Lincoln Blvd, Los Angeles CA 90045 - WAGE THEFT
-Liliana Garcia Wage Claim & folder of pay stubs with check numbers, attached
-Related Wage Theft Complaint filed 2/29/2024, attached

Owner: S & R Subway Inc., Surjit Multani, CEO, CFO, Director; Amrita Multani, Secretary
19716 Trammell Lane, Chatsworth CA 91311

My name is Liliana Garcia and I work at the Subway at 8406 Lincoln Blvd in Los Angeles. I am writing another wage theft complaint because management has continued to issue paychecks to me with insufficient funds and to pay me late.

Having my paychecks bounce and not being paid on time, and then not being paid at all for several pay periods have led to a series of events that completely destabilized my life and the life of my adult son, who lives with me. I fell behind on my bills and had to pay late fees, Wells Fargo closed my bank account, and I had to start cashing my paychecks at a check cashing place with high fees. Then, when I had to repay the check cashing place for 2 bounced paychecks at once (pay for 4 weeks of work!), I didn’t have money for September’s rent, I received a “3-day Notice” on September 17, 2025, my son and I were evicted, and we lost all our belongings when the van with what possessions we had left got stolen. Without access to my wages for several pay periods, I had to go into credit card debt to pay for basic necessities. My new apartment does not have a stove, and the one I own is broken, so I am using a small camping burner to heat my food while I save money to buy a new stove.



9/18/25: Text from Liliana to the Subway store owner.

Every time I am paid, I am unable to access my wages until at least a week after the check date, which is more than a week after the end of the pay period – this violates the laws that regulate how much time employers have to pay their workers. Often our checks are issued on a Tuesday (one week after the end of the pay

Liliana and her son were evicted after her paychecks bounced and then she was not paid at all for several pay periods. Source: Wage theft complaint filed with the Labor Commissioner’s Office December 5, 2025.

References: Folder of paystubs [here](#), Wage Claim Calcs [here](#), 2/29/24 complaint [here](#), Elizabeth Cruz wage theft 5/8/2025 [here](#), Sabina's Retaliation complaint 2/29/24 [here](#)

FAST FOOD - RETALIATION - WAGE THEFT - LACK OF PAID SICK LEAVE FOR BEREAVEMENT LEAVE - RESPONSE REQUESTED

Labor Commissioner's Office, DLSE - Wage Claims
1500 Hughes Way, Suite C-202, Long Beach CA 90810, 562 590-5084
VIA EMAIL: LaborComm.WCA.LBO@dir.ca.gov

February 26, 2026

RE: Subway, 8406 Lincoln Blvd, Los Angeles CA 90045 - 3rd WAGE THEFT COMPLAINT
-Wage Claim, attached
-Related Wage Theft Complaints filed 12/8/2025 and 2/29/2024, attached

Owner: S & R Subway Inc., Surjit Multani, CEO, CFO, Director; Amrita Multani, Secretary
19716 Trammell Lane, Chatsworth CA 91311

My name is Liliana Garcia, and I work at the Subway at 8406 Lincoln Blvd in Los Angeles. I am filing a **Wage Theft Complaint** because management failed to pay me my available paid sick leave for a scheduled day of work that I took off after requesting to take sick leave and bereavement leave.



On January 21, 2026, I told the manager (Jenny) that I needed to take a sick day and was going to miss work because my husband died. The manager responded saying that she would ask the next day because the pay period had already passed – but that is not how the law works. Under California law, workers are entitled to 5 days of job-protected bereavement leave within 3 months of the passing of a close family member, and paid sick leave can be used for bereavement leave. I also needed to take sick leave on January 22, 2026: I was sick and unable to work that day. I had sick leave available.

We cannot rely on management to give us the information we need - fast food workers like me need independently-administered training we can trust so that we know what to do when management refuses to pay us what we are owed, including sick pay.

When I asked the manager (Jenny) to pay me a sick day for the day, she replied: "I asked and they told me no because they are sick hours and you were not sick."

1

Management also wrongfully denied Liliana paid sick leave when she missed a day of work to bury her husband, who had recently passed away, and fired her a week after she made the paid sick leave request. Source: Wage theft complaint filed with the Labor Commissioner's Office February 26, 2026.

Harassment & Discrimination

Fast food workers experience harassment and discrimination at work, impacting our physical and psychological health and safety, and causing devastating losses of income and employment.

Civil rights laws in California protect workers from harassment and discrimination based on race, national origin, religion, age (over 40), disability, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, medical condition and other characteristics. Many fast food workers do not know about these protections or how to access them, or fear employer retaliation for reporting harassment or discrimination.

New Research

A new report published in March 2025 by Legal Aid at Work and the California Fast Food Workers Union shows that fast food workers face poverty and economic instability during pregnancy and the year after a baby is born, and that fast food workers face health and safety hazards and fear retaliation at work related to pregnancy.⁸⁹

Results of a worker survey published in the report show that among California fast food workers who were pregnant or new mothers, 86% worried about being fired or retaliated against for taking time off work for maternity leave or prenatal care, or if they needed to leave work for urgent medical care.⁹⁰ In addition, 87% of these workers reported they were afraid to ask for the changes they needed at work for a healthy pregnancy, such as accommodation for heavy lifting.



In several recent testimonies and complaints, fast food workers describe how the harassment and discrimination they faced was compounded by management inaction when they asked for help, and not knowing about their rights or how to get help.

In an example of pregnancy discrimination, Sophia describes that two months after her baby was born on the 4th of July, El Pollo Loco management illegally denied her return to work, putting her and her family on the brink of homelessness.⁹¹

Fast Food Worker Testimony, Sophia Lopez, December 19, 2024, California Fast Food Council

TESTIMONY OF SOPHIA LOPEZ

El Pollo Loco, 2506 International Blvd, Oakland
December 19, 2024

My name is Sophia Lopez and I worked at El Pollo Loco at 2506 International Blvd in Oakland until the last week of June, 2024, when I stopped working to give birth to my baby. I am writing this letter to the Fast Food Council to let you know about some of the problems that pregnant fast food workers face.

I gave birth on the 4th of July, and asked the manager to put me back on the schedule 2 months later, after I recovered from my C-section, and since then I have been fighting to get my job back – without my income from El Pollo Loco, my husband and I are falling behind on rent and on the brink of homelessness. When I first asked to be put back on the schedule in September, the manager asked me for a doctor's note, which is not required by law. When we started falling behind on rent in October, I reached out again to the manager and asked again for my job back; she told me sales were low and there was no position for me. In December I asked again, and the manager continued to illegally discriminate against me because of my pregnancy and only offered me work on the night shift, which is not my regular shift and which I am not able to work because of my child care situation. I learned from the CA Fast Food Workers Union that I had a right to take up to four months of job-protected leave leading up to and after my C-section, and that management is required to put workers back on the schedule within 2 days or as soon as possible after a worker requests to return from Pregnancy Disability leave. If management had respected my rights, I would have been back working my regular schedule at the beginning of September, and my husband and 2 children and I would not be facing homelessness.

From the beginning of my pregnancy I had problems at work, but I didn't know there was anything I could do about it. While I was pregnant, I was hungry and needed to eat more often than usual, but I couldn't eat when I needed to because management didn't even give us our 10-minute rest breaks, which would have allowed me time for a snack, so I often felt like I was starving at work. Also, I didn't know that management is required to consider and, if certain conditions are met, grant reasonable accommodations to workers affected by pregnancy or childbirth, such as additional breaks that allow pregnant employees to keep working. On a typical 8-hour shift, management at this Pollo Loco only allowed us to take the 30-minute meal break, and they didn't let us take the 2 10-minute rest breaks as legally required throughout the shift, instead only allowing us to take one 10-minute rest break during the last 10-minutes of our shift. Once I was so hungry that I asked my coworkers to let me take a break to eat, and the manager got angry and said "just leave and take your 10," which is how she tells people to leave work early. I never asked to take a break to eat again because I was scared of losing my job, so I just worked through the hunger.

On May 17, 2024, while I was 7 months pregnant, I was working at the cash register when two hooded men robbed the store, I thought they were armed but I wasn't sure. After they left, I started shaking and felt a sense of panic, and I couldn't concentrate from the fear. Several customers saw that I was upset and asked me if I was ok, and said they didn't know why I was still working after the robbery, and one

FAST FOOD - WORKER HEALTH & SAFETY - VIOLENCE - INJURY - HEALTH & SAFETY OF PREGNANT WORKER - IMMINENT HAZARD - RESPONSE REQUESTED

CalOSHA, Sacramento District Office; Joseph Crocker, District Manager
1750 Howe Ave Ste 430, Sacramento CA 95825; Tel: 916 263-2800; Fax: 916 263-2798

Via email: DOSHSA@dir.ca.gov

August 15, 2024

RE: **The Habit Burger Grill, 3161 Zinfandel Dr, Rancho Cordova CA 95670**
The Habit Burger Grill, 3030 Capitol Ave, Sacramento CA 95816

Employer: **Shannon Hennessy, CEO, The Habit Restaurants LLC, a Delaware Corporation,**
1 Glen Bell Way, Irvine CA 92618; 3301 Stober Rd, Louisville KY 40213

We are Alejandra Chiang, Maribel Ochoa, Sara Mejia, Claudia Perez, Makenzi Lidenfeld, Adelfa Cruz, Jacqueline Martinez and we work or worked until recently at The Habit Burger Grill stores located at 3161 Zinfandel Dr in Rancho Cordova, 3030 Capitol Ave in Sacramento and other Habit locations.

We are writing this CalOSHA Complaint because of ongoing violent treatment by the district manager at the Rancho Cordova Habit location, including an incident on **May 26, 2024 in which the district manager became enraged and threw a burger onto the hot grill, splashing hot grease onto a worker.** The district manager is white and discriminates against the Hispanic workers, treating the white cashiers differently than the Hispanic cooks and holding us to different standards. They also have the workers segregated in the store, with the Hispanic workers being assigned as cooks and white workers assigned as cashiers. She treats the Hispanic cooks with extreme impatience, anger, monitoring, screaming and yelling that has escalated into threats and violence. She doesn't treat the white cashiers like this. On July 15, 2024, after another incident in which the district manager became enraged at the cooks, Sara and Adelfa, who are Hispanic, had no choice but to quit in fear, and Makenzi, who is white, quit the same day because she was upset by how the district manager was treating us. **On July 30, 2024 we met with district managers (Ashley and Jose) after the incident and were promised our jobs back, but they are hiring new workers and have not put us back on the schedule.**

We are also reporting that management failed to provide access to necessary medical treatment for Jacqueline when she injured her foot and knee in an accident on July 1, 2024 at the Capitol Ave, Sacramento location, and prior to that management failed to take action to protect her health and safety when she was pregnant during winter/spring 2023. After Jacqueline told management she had a risky pregnancy due to 3 previous miscarriages, management continued to force her to unload deliveries alone, including carrying 50-pound boxes of meat and using a ladder to store heavy boxes of chicken, stating, **"Being pregnant isn't a sickness" and, "It doesn't matter what you tell me, you have to do it."**⁹²

When Jacqueline told management at the Habit Burger Grill that she had a risky pregnancy due to three previous miscarriages, her manager illegally denied her reasonable accommodations, forcing her to unload deliveries alone, including carrying 50-pound boxes of meat and using a ladder to store heavy boxes of chicken, stating: **"Being pregnant isn't a sickness,"** and **"It doesn't matter what you tell me, you have to do it."**⁹²

To: California Fast Food Council

From: Gabriela Flores, Isabela Borges, workers at Taco Bell, 3697 Park Drive, El Dorado Hills

RE: Urgent action needed to investigate workplace hazards and abuses, and adopt minimum standards to improve the lives of fast food workers

February 27, 2026

We are Gabriela Flores and Isabela Borges and we work at the Taco Bell located at 3697 Park Drive in El Dorado Hills.

We ask you to imagine that you see your store manager serving undercooked eggs to customers, and you worry the customers will get sick. You talk to the manager and he ignores you, so you tell the district manager, but nothing happens.

Imagine that you show your manager the chicken nuggets being served are covered in mold, and he tells you to keep serving them. Imagine that management tells you they will fire you if you throw away food, so you can't throw away the chips when you see cockroaches walking on them. Imagine you get diarrhea 2 hours after eating lunch at work, and your manager won't let you go home, and you have to keep preparing food in the kitchen.

Imagine you complain to management about these things, and instead of fixing them, they put warnings in your file.

At the same time, imagine that every day you experience relentless harassment – your manager complains about “fucking mexicans” and gets angry when customers speak Spanish. And sometimes the manager gets so angry that he loses control. Once he got so mad at you he punched the wall, causing his knuckles to bleed. You are always in fear of the next violent outburst.

All these things have been happening to us at the Taco Bell where we work.

The Fast Food Council is empowered to set minimum standards to improve working conditions for the 630,000 fast food workers statewide. To do this, the Council must begin a process to investigate the causes of and the potential solutions to the pervasive abuses we experience working in fast food, and start working to address them. The Fast Food Council should also support pilot independently-administered Know Your Rights initiatives in the City of Los Angeles and Santa Clara County, so that workers like us know what to do to protect ourselves and our customers if management ignores us when we report hazards and abuse.

Isabela and Gabriela describe relentless racist and sexist harassment and discrimination working at a Taco Bell in El Dorado Hills, and that they made verbal, text and written reports about these problems to the District Manager and to HR, but their reports were ignored.⁹³ In complaints to the California Civil Rights Dept, the workers stated that the store manager calls them “stupid”, “motherfuckers” and “fucking Mexicans,” makes racist statements when he sees Latino customers who do not speak English, and also makes inappropriate sexual comments and gestures. The store manager’s actions have escalated into physical violence on several occasions, including: punching a wall next to one of the worker’s head so hard that his knuckles bled; ripping a hose out of a worker’s hand, hurting her finger; and yanking a tray away from a worker, causing hot oil to splash on her and burning her hand.

The store manager at the KFC/Taco Bell where Edith and Guadalupe work makes discriminatory statements throughout the day into the headsets that workers wear – saying older workers are useless, and that she “wants to see collagen.”⁹⁴ Management cut the workers’ schedule and gave their hours to younger workers, and said if someone didn’t like the schedule, Immigration should throw them out.

RE: KFC/Taco Bell, 1695 Hollenbeck Ave, Sunnyvale CA 94807

To: Board President Otto Lee, Supervisor.Lee@bos.sccgov.org
 Board Vice President Sylvia Arenas, district1@bos.sccgov.org
 Supervisor Susan Ellenberg, supervisor.ellenberg@bos.sccgov.org
 Supervisor Betty Duong, District2@bos.sccgov.org
 Supervisor Margaret Abe-Koga, District5@bos.sccgov.org

December 9, 2025

Dear Santa Clara County Supervisors:

We are Edith Orellana and Guadalupe Duran, and we work at the KFC/Taco Bell located at 1695 Hollenbeck Ave, Sunnyvale in Santa Clara County. We are writing to share with you about the problems fast food workers are facing every day and ask you to support a Fast Food Fair Work law for Santa Clara County.

The store manager harasses and humiliates us, saying vile things throughout the day into the headsets that we all wear – she says she thinks that older workers are useless, that she “wants to see collagen,” that older workers are stupid and younger workers are smarter, and that she will be happier when the older workers are out and replaced with younger workers. Management cut our schedules and gave our hours to new, younger workers – they cut Edith’s schedule in half, from 32-36 hours per week down to 16 hours (a cut of about \$1280/mo), and Guadalupe had her schedule cut about 5 hours per week cut (a cut of about \$400/mo).

When Edith asked about the cuts, the store manager responded that the District Manager told her **that she was going to send the “Migra” after anyone who bothers her, and “If someone doesn’t like the schedule, Immigration should throw them out.”** She told Guadalupe that if immigration comes, **workers could “hide in the garbage” or “jump out the window.”** Threatening immigration enforcement for asking questions or raising issues is illegal, and harms all workers by creating a chilling effect in which workers do not feel safe to talk to management about workplace problems.

When Edith had a shoulder injury at work, she could not afford the prescription that she was given for medication, and she did not know about her rights to employer-paid treatment, paid time off to heal, and accommodations at work. When she told the store manager that her doctor said she shouldn’t raise her right arm above her head and requested accommodations, the store manager refused, stating: **“I put people where I need them, and that is where I need you, I don’t need you anywhere else. And you don’t have any more sick days so if you take time off, you won’t be paid.”** The store manager also said that if Edith had disability-related restrictions then management did not need her to work there anymore since there are many other people applying every day who could replace her.

Maria broke her hand and returned to work with restrictions on lifting for four weeks.⁹⁵

After the restrictions were over, management cut her schedule in half, from around 40 hours per week to just 20, a reduction of pay of \$1,600 per month, leaving her and her husband to rely on free food from food pantries, because they can't afford to put food on the table.

**FAST FOOD - CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLAINT - DISCRIMINATION & HARASSMENT - DISABILITY
DISCRIMINATION - RESPONSE REQUESTED**

California Civil Rights Department Headquarters
2218 Kausen Drive, Suite 100 Elk Grove, CA 95758
Via Email: contact.center@calcivilrights.ca.gov

April 25, 2025

RE: McDonald's, 5508 Monterey Rd, San Jose 95138

Employer: Henley Restaurants Inc; James Henley, CEO; Stacey Henley, Secretary, CFO;
6830 Via Del Oro Ste 101, San Jose 95119

My name is Maria Ramirez and I have been working at the McDonald's at 5508 Monterey Rd in San Jose for over 28 years. I am writing this Civil Rights Department Complaint because management at this McDonald's is discriminating because of a temporary disability that I had when I broke my hand and returned to work with a doctors' note restricting lifting for 4 weeks, from October 21-November 18, 2024. Since I returned to work on October 21, 2024, management cut my schedule, and my income, in half, even after I no longer had any restrictions, saying work hours are only available for people with "abilities." Before management started discriminating against me, I worked full time at this McDonald's. This schedule cut of 20 hours a week – around \$1600/mo – is making my life very hard. My husband and I both rely on my job as our only source of income. My husband had surgery on his arm and has been unable to work. We survive on free food from the food pantries because I cannot afford to put food on the table without falling behind on the bills.

On August 14, 2024 I broke my hand at home and was not able to work for two months while I recovered. When I came back to work in October 2024, I turned in a note from my doctor saying I had lifting restrictions for 4 weeks. **Specifically, the doctors note states: "start 2 pounds wt bearing for 2 weeks then 5 pounds for 2 weeks then no restrictions"**. Since then management cut my schedule in half, from around 40 hours a week to just 20, a reduction in pay of \$1,600 a month. When I asked the store manager, Stephanie, why my hours had been cut, she said it was because of my restrictions and because she couldn't let me work my typical morning shift alone, but after 4 weeks, when I no longer had restrictions, the schedule cuts continued.

Around March 2025, I asked the assistant store manager, Melissa, why I was still only scheduled for 20 hours a week, and she responded that I had asked for the schedule cut, which is not true. I then spoke to the store manager (Stephanie) again about it, and she said that she only gives hours to "workers who have abilities." I have been working at this store for over 28 years. I only had a temporary restriction for 4 weeks, in October/November 2024. I know that I have the "ability" to work my regular full-time schedule.

Employer Retaliation

California workers enjoy many labor protections, but fast food workers frequently face employer retaliation when we try to uphold them. Workers who report life-threatening violence, excessive heat and other hazardous conditions are frequently assigned worse tasks at work and experience schedule cuts, schedule changes and firings. Workers also frequently face retaliation, and threats of retaliation, for calling off work sick, asking for sick pay; throwing away rotten, spoiled and contaminated food; or reporting harassment and discrimination and other hazards and abuses.

New Research

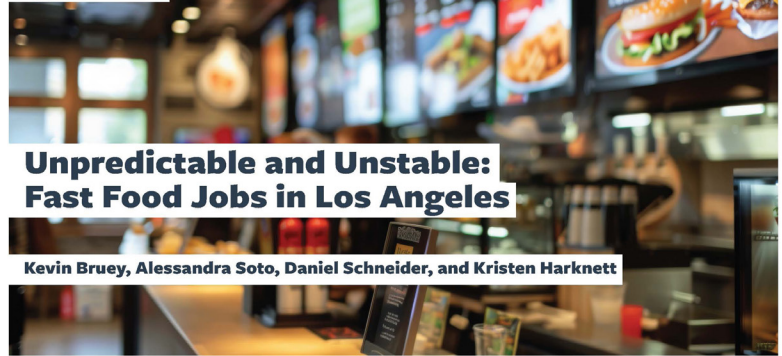
A new survey of over one thousand workers employed or recently-employed by the 98 largest service sector firms in California found **more than half of workers who reported an apparent labor standards violation reported some form of employer retaliation for doing so.**⁹⁶

Published by Daniel Schneider and Kirsten Harknett at SHIFT, a joint project of the Harvard Kennedy School and the Malcolm Wiener Center for Social Policy at UC San Francisco titled “Compliance and the Complaint Gap,” the study measured the state of compliance with core labor standards relating to the minimum wage, overtime pay, paid sick leave and required meal and rest breaks. **The survey also found that 78% of workers who experienced apparent labor standards violations did not choose to step forward and report the violation.**⁹⁷

Recent surveys of California fast food workers show similarly-disturbing findings. **Thirty-seven percent of fast food workers surveyed in the 2025 California Fast Food Worker Food Safety Survey who reported food safety issues at work or asked for other changes to improve food safety said they experienced retaliation for doing so.**⁹⁸



RESEARCH BRIEF | January 2026



Unpredictable and Unstable: Fast Food Jobs in Los Angeles

Kevin Bruey, Alessandra Soto, Daniel Schneider, and Kristen Harknett

In April of 2023, the city of Los Angeles enacted a [Retail Fair Workweek Ordinance \(FWWO\)](#) for large retailers. With the goal of improving the predictability and stability of workers’ schedules, this ordinance requires that retail companies with 300+ employees offer their workers at least 14 days’ advance notice of their work schedule, provide good-faith estimates of hours and the right to request schedule changes, and disburse “predictability pay” for last-minute changes or insufficient rest between shifts. In July of 2025, these protections were expanded to retail workers throughout the rest of the county. Los Angeles has joined a growing list of states and localities that have implemented Fair Workweek regulations—but many workers remain uncovered.

This research brief focuses on the working conditions of fast food workers in Los Angeles County, who are not covered by the FWWO. Fast food firms are defined as order-at-counter restaurants where food is served in carry-out packaging; places like McDonald’s, Taco Bell, Chick-fil-A, and Domino’s Pizza. Nearly 200,000 people

in the Los Angeles metropolitan area are employed in the fast food industry ([California EDD 2025](#)). We draw on recent survey data from fast food workers in the Los Angeles County service sector, collected by the Shift Project between spring 2021 and fall 2025, to better understand how these workers are faring. We also utilize data from retail workers in the county and throughout the state of California as a point of comparison, as well as to estimate how the FWWO in the city of Los Angeles has served to improve the quality of covered workers’ schedules.

Service sector jobs in the United States are often characterized by low pay, few fringe benefits, and limited employee control over scheduled work days and times ([Lambert 2008](#)). Many service sector employers across the country rely on just-in-time and on-call scheduling practices designed to minimize labor costs by closely aligning staffing with consumer demand ([Appelbaum et al. 2003](#); [Golden 2015](#); [Clawson & Gerstel 2015](#)). These practices can introduce significant instability into the lives of workers and their families ([Lambert et al. 2014](#); [Schneider & Harknett 2019](#)).

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MALCOLM WIENER CENTER
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In recent complaints filed with Cal/OSHA, the Labor Commissioner’s Office, the Retaliation Complaint Investigation Unit, the California Civil Rights Department, the courts and other local and state entities, fast food workers describe the violations and abuses we face at work, and the retaliation we face from our employers when we try to address them.

Like many fast food workers, Gerardo was denied the paid sick leave he was owed and fired from Popeyes in San Jose when he got sick and missed four days of work.⁹⁹ Management told Gerardo he had to find someone to cover his shifts, but that they wouldn’t pay overtime. When Gerardo couldn’t find a coworker willing to work double shifts for four days without overtime pay, management fired him.

FAST FOOD - SICK LEAVE RETALIATION - RESPONSE REQUESTED

Labor Commissioner’s Office, Retaliation Complaint Investigation Unit
2031 Howe Ave Ste 100, Sacramento CA 95825
VIA EMAIL: Retaliation@dir.ca.gov

November 22, 2024

RE: Popeyes, 1783 Capitol Expy San Jose, CA 95121

Owner: RMV Foods Inc; Mukhtiar Johal, CEO; Ranjit Johal, CFO; Vivek Sharma, Secretary
293 Wright Brothers Ave, Livermore CA 94551

My name is Gerardo Acevedo and I worked at the Popeyes at 1783 Capitol Expy in San Jose until I was fired after I experienced chest pain and heart palpitations and called in sick for 4 days, and management retaliated against me by firing me when I couldn’t find someone to cover all my shifts. I was evaluated at the hospital on May 20, 2024 and I called and told management I was sick that same day. Even though she knew I was sick, the manager Gloria told me that I needed to find someone to cover my shifts, which is what typically happens at this store when someone is out sick. I found a coworker to cover my shifts for 3 days that week, clocking in and out under my name, but on the fourth day he didn’t want to keep working like that and I was still sick and couldn’t find someone to cover for me, and the manager Gloria texted me that I could no longer work there.

Getting fired for getting sick completely changed my life, so far I have lost about \$10,000 in income because of this retaliation (approx \$20/hr*25hr/week*20 weeks), and I haven’t been able to find another job yet to replace the income I lost, so I lost my apartment and now share a room with a friend for \$600/mo, which is all I can afford, and now I can only send \$200/mo to my mother, who depends on me since my father died 3 years ago. Before I got fired, I would send her around \$600/mo. I had to cut my expenses so I can keep paying my car insurance, so I can get to my other job. Getting fired made me depressed and I have since had to go on medication because the stress of losing my job made my blood pressure spike.

Management at this Popeye’s also fired my former coworker Edwin around 5 months ago after he got sick and called off work. He connected me with the CA Fast Food Workers Union, where I learned that I have a right to sick pay and that it was illegal to retaliate against me for taking my available paid sick days. I have also filed a Wage Theft Complaint and Wage Claim for the 4 days of Paid Sick Leave that I am owed.

Please use the enforcement authority of the Retaliation Complaint Investigation Unit to ensure my employer:

- Gives me my job back, with my regular schedule of 25 hours per week
- Stops retaliating against workers for taking available paid sick time

“Getting fired for getting sick completely changed my life, so far I have lost about \$10,000 in income because of this retaliation, and I haven’t been able to find another job yet to replace the income I lost, so I lost my apartment and now share a room with a friend for \$600 a month, which is all I can afford, and now I can only send \$200/mo to my mother, who depends on me since my father died 3 years ago. Before I got fired, I would send her around \$600/mo. I had to cut my expenses so I can keep paying my car insurance, so I can get to my other job,” stated Gerardo in a complaint filed with the Retaliation Complaint Investigation Unit. In the complaint, Gerardo also described the toll that employer retaliation was taking on his mental and physical health: “Getting fired made me depressed and I have since had to go on medication because the stress of losing my job made my blood pressure spike.”

Management at a Domino's in Los Angeles retaliated against Saulo, cutting one day per week from his schedule, when he asked to use three days of available paid sick leave to care for his mother who was in the hospital with cancer, and cutting two more days a week off his schedule when he called out sick for two days, hospitalized with a virus.¹⁰⁰

In his complaint, Saulo stated: “Since management started retaliating against me, I feel frustrated, depressed, and useless, I can't pay my bills, I am behind on my rent, and I can no longer support my mother, who is in and out of the hospital, and who is also behind on rent and her electric bills.”

FAST FOOD - WORKER HEALTH & SAFETY - SICK PAY RETALIATION - IMMINENT HAZARD - RESPONSE REQUESTED

Labor Commissioner's Office
Retaliation Complaint Investigation Unit
320 West Fourth Street, Suite 450, Los Angeles CA 90013
(213) 620-6330

Via email: RCI@dir.ca.gov

November 22, 2024

RE: Domino's, 270 S Rampart Blvd, Los Angeles CA 90057
-DLSE RCI-1 form attached

Employer: SOCAL4 LLC, Malli Patibandla Rao, Manager
1935 E Colorado Blvd #B, Pasadena CA 91107

My name is Saulo Ordonez and I have worked at the Domino's at 270 S Rampart Blvd in Los Angeles for three years. I am filing this complaint because management at this Domino's store cut 3 days a week from my schedule in retaliation for calling out sick - cutting 1 day per week off my schedule in March 2024 when I asked to use 3 days of my available paid sick leave to take care of my mother who was in the hospital with cancer, and then cutting 2 more days a week off my schedule after I called out sick because I was in the hospital for two days with a virus June 25-26, 2024.

Also, when I asked to get paid for the paid sick leave I was owed, management refused to pay me and told me - incorrectly - that I didn't have any available paid sick leave; I did not argue with the manager because I did not know that she was wrong, I only learned later that I had available sick time after speaking to the CA Fast Food Workers Union. Management said because there was a change in ownership of this franchise that no one had been employed long enough yet with the new owner to qualify for paid sick leave. I have been working here for 3 years so I shouldn't lose my accumulated paid sick leave just because the franchise ownership changed, but even so, I learned from the CA Fast Food Workers Union that I am entitled to paid sick leave under the new ownership after 90 days, and more than 90 days had passed; I had already accumulated over 9 hours of available paid sick leave with the new franchise owner, and my pay stub shows correctly that I had available paid sick leave.

Since management started retaliating against me, I feel frustrated, depressed, and useless, I can't pay my bills, I am behind on my rent, and I can no longer support my mother, who is in and out of the hospital, and who is also behind on rent and her electric bills.

In addition to this Retaliation Complaint, I am also filing a Wage Claim with the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement for the \$987.95 in paid sick leave and penalties I am owed.

FAST FOOD - RETALIATION FOR TAKING AVAILABLE PAID SICK LEAVE - RESPONSE REQUESTED

Labor Commissioner's Office, Retaliation Complaint Investigation Unit
2031 Howe Ave Suite 100, Sacramento, CA 95825
Via Email: Retaliation@dir.ca.gov

December 8, 2025

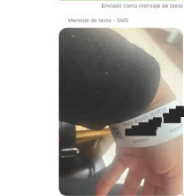
RE: Yoshinoya, 1461 S La Cienega Blvd, Los Angeles

Owner: Yoshinoya America Inc, 991 W Knox St, Torrance CA 90502
Norihiro Ozawa, CEO; Fumiko Carney, Secretary; Satoshi Nishimori, CFO

My name is Martha Fraga and I work at the Yoshinoya store at 1461 S La Cienega in Los Angeles.

I am writing this Retaliation Complaint because management at this Yoshinoya retaliated against me by cutting my schedule from 26 hours per week down to just 15.5 hours per week - a loss of income of approximately \$3,550 so far - for taking paid sick leave to care for my mother when she was in the hospital in June 2025, and when I was sick in the hospital after having a minor stroke in August 2025.

7:33
Hello Yemaya, good morning! I want to let you know that I won't be going to work tomorrow because I'm in the emergency room. I feel really bad. It seems like I've had a minor stroke.



My mom is important to me, and I shouldn't have to put my livelihood at risk to take care of her when she needs me. I learned from the CA Fast Food Workers Union that it is against the law for my employer to prevent me from, or retaliate against me for, taking available paid sick leave to care for a close family member, and that the Retaliation Complaint Investigation Unit has the authority to hold my employer accountable, and I can file a complaint. I also learned that a new anti-retaliation law, SB497, went into effect in 2024, and includes penalties for employers who retaliate against workers, including fast food workers, of \$10,000 per violation for each worker.

8/3/2025: Text from Martha informing Yoshinoya management that she would miss work the next day because she was in the ER with a minor stroke; management retaliated by cutting her regular work schedule.

On June 15, 2025, I informed the manager (Yemaya) that my mother was sick and that I would be going to Mexico to take care of her. I was gone for a week, missing approximately 20 hours of scheduled work, and when I returned to work on June 23, 2025 I found that my schedule for the following week had been reduced from 26 hours per week to 17 hours per week. Two weeks later I asked the manager why my schedule had been cut and she told

Martha texted management at Yoshinoya a picture of herself wearing a hospital bracelet when she missed two shifts of work for a minor stroke (Bell's palsy) in August 2025.¹⁰¹ She previously missed five shifts to care for her mother.

Management refused Martha the sick pay she was owed and retaliated against her, cutting her schedule down from 26 hours per week to just 15.5 hours, a loss of thousands of dollars in income.

Taco Bell management retaliated against Dolores for reporting an incident of workplace violence, cutting her schedule and her income by around \$1,120 per month, causing her to fall behind on her car insurance bills and with barely enough money to pay rent.¹⁰²

In the incident, a coworker became agitated and charged at her with raised fists, but was intercepted by a manager. Dolores went to court and was granted a Temporary Restraining Order against the worker, who had a history of screaming and drinking alcohol at work.

FAST FOOD - ONGOING RETALIATION (CalOSHA - VIOLENCE) - RESPONSE REQUESTED

Labor Commissioner's Office, Retaliation Complaint Investigation Unit
2031 Howe Ave Ste 100, Sacramento CA 95825
Via email: oshaRetaliation@dir.ca.gov

May 5, 2025

RE: **Taco Bell, 2779 Aborn Rd, San Jose, CA 95121**

Employer: SG Elison, Manager/Member, Golden Gate Bell LLC, Diversified Restaurant Group
465 First Street West, 2nd Fl, Sonoma CA 95476, 702-880-5818
-RCI-DLSEI form, attached

My name is Dolores Loaiza Vargas and I work at the Taco Bell at 2779 Aborn Rd in San Jose. I am writing this Retaliation Complaint because management retaliated against me, cutting my schedule by 14 hours per week (around \$1,120/mo), after I reported to HR that a co-worker tried to attack me at work. On February 19, 2025, my coworker was behaving erratically, her hands were shaking, she was criticizing me for no reason, and then after an interaction she charged at me with raised fists like she was going to punch me, until the manager got between us and stopped her.

After the incident I felt terrible, with a severe headache, and I went to the hospital and they told me my blood pressure had spiked to 200, and also a blood vessel in my eye burst causing it to turn red. They conducted a CT scan to check my brain and diagnosed me with stress and anxiety, which I believe is a result of being forced to work alongside this aggressive employee. For several nights after the incident I woke up every two hours with anxiety and felt like crying all the time.

I went to court and was granted a Temporary Restraining Order and management moved the worker to a different shift. When I reported the incident to HR, they told me they would open an investigation and would provide mental health support, but they did not provide information about mental health treatment or access to counseling, such as how to access mental health treatment through Workers Comp. HR investigated the incident and gave me a letter dated April 7, 2025 stating, "...based on our investigation it does appear that inappropriate behavior occurred, specifically, behavior that violates Company policy against harassment and discrimination." Although this incident has now been resolved, management continues to retaliate against me for reporting the incident to HR, cutting my work hours resulting in a cut to my income of around \$1,120 a month, leaving me behind on my car insurance bills and with barely enough money to pay my rent.

Before the day of the attack, this worker had a history of screaming and drinking alcohol at work. My coworkers and I complained several times to management that we were concerned about her erratic and aggressive behavior, but they did not take action to protect us. She calls one of the managers, "mi

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FAST FOOD - RETALIATION - RESPONSE REQUESTED

Labor Commissioner's Office
Retaliation Complaint Investigation Unit
320 W 4th Street, Ste 450, Los Angeles CA 90013

Via email: oshaRetaliation@dir.ca.gov

November 4, 2024

RE: **El Pollo Loco, 101 E Manchester Ave, Los Angeles CA 90003**
El Pollo Loco Inc, 3535 Harbor Blvd Ste 100, Costa Mesa CA 92626
Maria Hollandsworth, CEO
-CalOSHA Violence Complaint filed 10/31/24, attached
-RCI form

My name is Yesica Maldonado, I am 19 years old and I worked at El Pollo Loco at 101 E Manchester until August 31, 2024 when I was fired in retaliation for reporting to the store manager about a violent customer. On August 21, 2024 a customer got upset about her order, scratched my hand through the drive-thru window, came into the lobby yelling "Where is that fat bitch from drive-thru, I'm gonna throw you on the grill!" and then she walked past the counter into our workspace, approaching me yelling "I'm gonna fuck you up! I'm gonna fuck you up!" No one called the police.

I reported to the store manager several times, while the customer was still in the drive-thru, that the customer was becoming increasingly aggressive and I didn't feel comfortable continuing to serve her, and the manager sent me back to serve her as she became increasingly angry. In my experience, sometimes being served by a different worker can calm down an angry customer, but the store manager insisted that I continue serving the angry customer. After the incident, the manager told me that because I reported to him about the incident that there would be an investigation by HR, I wrote a statement for HR about the incident on August 22, 2024, and I continued to work without receiving any feedback from management until I was fired 10 days later.

Management did not train me on how to handle violent customers, or what to do if a customer came into the store to attack me, or that I have a right to work in a safe environment and report health and safety hazards to management without retaliation. A coworker told me that I have rights and I should talk to the CA Fast Food Workers Union and find out what to do, and I learned that it is illegal to fire me for reporting a violence hazard at work, so I am filing this complaint. Fast food workers like me need to be able to report to management about violence incidents at work, and what can be done to make it safer, without fear of retaliation, like what happened to me.

Please use the enforcement authority of the Retaliation Complaint Investigation Unit to investigate this violation of the law; I need my job back, and I am seeking back wages and penalties as allowed.

Many other workers have recently reported retaliation by management for reporting workplace violence.

A customer who was upset about her order scratched 19-year-old Yesica through the drive-thru window, and then came into the lobby of an El Pollo Loco in Los Angeles screaming, "Where is that fat bitch from the drive-thru, I'm gonna throw you on the grill!" and then she approached Yesica yelling "I'm gonna fuck you up, I'm gonna fuck you up!"¹⁰³ There was no security at the store and no one called the police. "I remember her order, it was a double chicken avocado salad and a burrito, with ranch dressing. She got upset because her order didn't have the ranch dressing she asked for," described Yesica.

Yesica reported the incident to management and was fired.

In complaints filed with Cal/OSHA and the Retaliation Complaint Investigation Unit, Yesica and her coworker stated: "At El Pollo Loco, they teach us everything about new salads, but they don't train us on the basics for being safe, like what to do if we are getting attacked, or when and how to call the police."

McDonald’s management in Oakland retaliated against Imelda, Ana and Lourdes for filing a Cal/OSHA complaint about ongoing life-threatening violence at the store, including an incident with a machete and an armed robbery.¹⁰⁴

Management cut Imelda’s schedule in half, from around 36 hours per week down to just 18 hours - a loss of about \$1300 per month, at the same time that her rent went up from \$2150 to \$2250 per month.

Ana had her schedule cut from around 32 hours per week down to around 17 hours per week, a cut of about 15 hours per week - resulting in over \$1000 per month in lost income. Ana described in the complaint that as the mother of an eight-year-old and a 12-year-old, she had to feed her children and pay the rent, and that she had already fallen \$500 behind on gas and electricity bills. Lourdes’ schedule was cut from around 40 hours per week down to about 20 hours.

FAST FOOD - RETALIATION FOR FILING CalOSHA VIOLENCE COMPLAINT (filed 12/20/2023) - RESPONSE REQUESTED

LABOR COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE
 RETALIATION COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION UNIT
 2031 HOWE AVE SUITE 100, SACRAMENTO CA 95825
 Phone: (714) 558-4913; Fax: (714) 662-6058

Via email: oshaRetaliation@dir.ca.gov

April 2, 2024

RE: McDonald’s, 6300 E 14th Street, Oakland CA 94621
 Attachments:
 Additional Retaliation Complaint (CFRA) filed 4/2/2024
 Related CalOSHA Violence complaint filed 12/20/2023
 Previous CalOSHA complaints filed 10/13/22, 6/9/2020, 4/17/2020
 Previous Retaliation Complaint filed 10/13/22

Owner: Pavilions Management, LLC; Aladdin Sammakieh, Managing Member
 1198 San Pablo Ave, Berkeley CA 94704

We are Imelda Arroyo, Ana Lopez and Lourdes Mejia and we work at the McDonald’s at 6300 E 14th Street in Oakland. We are filing this Complaint with the Retaliation Complaint Investigation Unit because management at this McDonald’s is retaliating against us by cutting our work hours and our income by about 50% - from full time down to half time - for filing a Violence Complaint with CalOSHA about the ongoing life-threatening violence at the store, including an incident with a machete on September 16, 2023 and an armed robbery on December 14, 2023.

We all worked full time at this McDonald’s until December 20, 2023, the day we filed the Violence Complaint with CalOSHA and held an action at the store where we spoke up about the need for management to protect us from the violence. That same day, management closed the store lobby indefinitely and said that they were cutting everyone’s hours across-the-board, mainly via switching from 8-hour shifts to 6-hour shifts - which would be a cut of about 25%. However these “across-the-board” schedule cuts exist only on the paper schedule, while in reality, the schedule cuts have been retaliatory, mainly affecting the complainants, who suffer 50% schedule cuts, while other workers continued to be scheduled full time and/or are called in early or asked to stay late, thus maintaining their hours and income.

Management cut Imelda’s schedule in half, from around 36 hours per week down to just 18 hours - a loss of about \$1300 per month. At the same time, Imelda’s rent went up from \$2150 to \$2250 per month. Ana had her schedule cut from around 32 hours per week down to around 17 hours per week, a

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FAST FOOD - CalOSHA RETALIATION - RESPONSE REQUESTED

CalOSHA, Los Angeles District Office
 District Manager (Vacant)
 320 W 4th St, Room 820, Los Angeles CA 90013
 Tel: (213) 576-7451, Fax: (213) 576-7461
 Via email: oshaRetaliation@dir.ca.gov

March 12, 2025

RE: Taco Bell, 6000 Crenshaw Blvd, Los Angeles CA 90043
 DLSE-1 form, attached
 Related CalOSHA Complaints filed 4/16/24 and 11/6/2024, attached

Owner: Alvarado Restaurant Group, LLC; Linda G. Alvarado, Manager/Member
 5654 GREENWOOD PLAZA BLVD, GREENWOOD VILLAGE, CO 80111

My name is Alejandra Aguilar-Perez and I work at the Taco Bell store at 6000 Crenshaw Blvd in Los Angeles. I was involuntarily transferred there in retaliation for filing a CalOSHA Complaint on 4/16/24. The complaint asserted that management failed to take action to protect me and my coworkers from multiple incidents of workplace violence that occurred when I worked at this owner’s store located at 3629 S Vermont Ave location.

I have been experiencing ongoing retaliation for filing OSHA complaints, including: being transferred to a store far from my daughter’s school, which is difficult for me; being set up for an accusation of stealing by giving me a cash register that was short before I started working on it several times; and having my hours cut from full-time down to about just 8 hours per week, causing me and my daughter to lose our housing and become homeless. I urge this department to order the employer to reinstate me at my original store, to restore my hours to 35-40 hours per week, to order the owner to compensate me with backpay for hours it has withheld from me in retaliation from my complaints, and to order the owner to refrain from retaliating against me for exercising my rights. I also urge this department to order the employer to pay the maximum penalties available for their ongoing retaliation against me for filing complaints related to health and safety in the workplace.

I originally used to work at the Taco Bell store at 3629 South Vermont Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 9000. At 3629 South Vermont, I generally worked 5 days a week, between 7-8 hours per day.

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In April 2024, management retaliated against Alejandra for filing a Cal/OSHA complaint after she defended herself and her coworkers with a pizza cutter when a man chased her into the kitchen and threatened to kill her.¹⁰⁵

Management transferred Alejandra to a store far from her daughter’s school, and cut her hours from full time down to just eight hours per week, leaving her broke, homeless and separated from her young daughter.

FAST FOOD - RETALIATION FOR FILING COVID COMPLAINTS - RESPONSE REQUESTED

LABOR COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE
RETALIATION COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION UNIT
2031 HOWE AVE SUITE 100, SACRAMENTO CA 95825

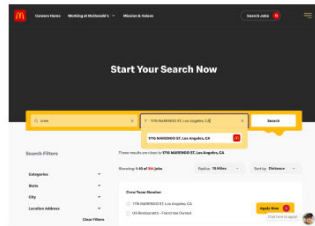
Via email: oshaRetaliation@dir.ca.gov

March 28, 2024

RE: **McDonald's, 1716 Marengo St, Los Angeles CA 90033**
DLSE-RCI1 form, attached

Owner: Dean R Sanchez, CEO, Manager/Member, Agent, DRS Hospitality LLC
1000 Lakes Dr Suite 165, West Covina CA 91790

My name is Lizzet Aguilar and I am writing this letter seeking enforcement of the Hearing Officer's decision announced in the Dept of Industrial Relations Press Release #2023-30 dated April 13, 2023 that I be reinstated in my job as a Crew Team Member at the 1716 Marengo Street, Los Angeles McDonald's store, after I was fired in retaliation for reporting unsafe working conditions due to lack of COVID-19 safety during the early days of the pandemic.



Management has been retaliating against me for filing the retaliation complaint about being fired since May 5, 2023, when I was expecting to be reinstated in my job after I won my case.

This image, captured March 12, 2024 from <https://jobs.mchire.com/>, shows that the 1716 Marengo St, Los Angeles McDonald's store is currently hiring for the position of "Crew Team Member".

I filed COVID safety complaints with CalOSHA because management was failing to follow public health guidance to prevent the spread of COVID, including failing to notify and quarantine us during outbreaks at the store, and failing to provide adequate PPE. This was before vaccines and treatments were available, and at a time when restaurant cooks were among the job classifications with the highest death rates from COVID in California.

Now, nearly 4 years after I was fired, I am still fighting to get my job back.

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McDonald's management fired Lizzet for reporting lack of Covid safety during the early days of the pandemic – she won her retaliation case at the Department of Industrial Relations, but management has continued to retaliate against her.¹⁰⁶

Lizzet's new complaint filed with the Retaliation Complaint Investigation Unit shows that management had posted that jobs were available at the same time they were refusing to rehire her. Nearly six years have passed since she was fired, and Lizzet is still fighting to get her job back.

Immigration Enforcement Threats

The Trump administration's increasingly-lawless federal immigration enforcement is terrorizing our communities. Mass detention and deportation efforts are escalating across the country. And many employers are feeling newly-emboldened to threaten workers with immigration enforcement as a form of retaliation against workers asking about their sick leave, or about getting paid on time, or for reporting food safety and worker health hazards. And we all have seen that anyone can be arrested or harmed by ICE, regardless of immigration status.

Threatening immigration enforcement for asking questions or raising issues is illegal, and harms all workers by creating a chilling effect in which workers do not feel safe to talk to management about workplace problems. In addition, under California law, ICE and DHS are not permitted to enter nonpublic areas of the store without a warrant issued by a court and signed by a judge, and there are penalties for employers that allow ICE or DHS to enter nonpublic areas without a signed judicial warrant.¹⁰⁷ Many workers are not aware that labor rights apply to all workers, regardless of immigration status.

New Research

In a survey of over 300 California fast food workers conducted in February 2025 – before the June 2025 surge of federal immigration enforcement in Los Angeles – 82% of workers surveyed said that workers who are worried about their immigration status are less likely to report or file complaints about workplace problems like wage theft, harassment and discrimination, or health and safety hazards.¹⁰⁸

In addition, most fast food workers surveyed do not know that all workers, regardless of immigration status, enjoy basic labor rights, and most say that worry about immigration status deters workers from accessing programs and benefits to which they are entitled, including deterring pregnant workers from taking paid maternity leave under California Pregnancy Disability Insurance and Paid Family Leave laws, and deterring injured workers from applying for Workers Compensation and State Disability Insurance.¹⁰⁹

OUR RIGHTS AT WORK: IMMIGRATION & LABOR RIGHTS IN FAST FOOD



Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
California Fast Food Workers Union, SEIU

May 2025



KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

Among California fast food workers surveyed about immigration and rights at work:¹

82%

SILENCED AT WORK

82% say workers who are worried about their immigration status are less likely to report or file complaints about workplace problems like wage theft, harassment and discrimination, or health and safety hazards.²

67%

AT GREATER RISK OF WAGE THEFT & SAFETY HAZARDS

67% say workers worried about their immigration status are at greater risk of being cheated out of their pay or made to work in a situation that is unsafe.³

63%

DON'T KNOW ABOUT RIGHTS FOR ALL WORKERS, REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS

63% of respondents do not know that all workers—regardless of immigration status—have rights to file complaints, claims and lawsuits to address workplace problems such as safety hazards, wage theft, harassment and discrimination.⁴

77%

INJURED WORKERS DETERRED FROM COMPENSATION BENEFITS

77% say worry about immigration status deters injured workers from applying for programs and benefits, such as Workers Compensation and State Disability Insurance.⁵

72%

PREGNANT WORKERS DETERRED FROM MATERNITY LEAVE BENEFITS

72% say worry about immigration status deters pregnant workers from taking paid maternity leave.⁶

94%

DON'T KNOW ABOUT WHICH BENEFITS & PROGRAMS ARE AVAILABLE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS

94% of respondents don't know about which benefits and programs are available to all California workers regardless of immigration status.⁷

In a survey of over 300 California fast food workers conducted in February 2025 – before the June 2025 surge of federal immigration enforcement in Los Angeles – 82% said that workers who are worried about their immigration status are less likely to report or file complaints about workplace problems like wage theft, harassment and discrimination, or health and safety hazards. Source: “Our Rights at Work: Immigration & Labor Rights in Fast Food,” CHIRLA & California Fast Food Workers Union, May 2025, p 5.

Worker Voices

Recent complaints filed by fast food workers provide examples of how fast food managers respond to workers who report wage theft and other abuses with threats of immigration enforcement. When Taco Bell workers in Alhambra started asking questions about wage theft – including off-the-clock work, forgery of employee timesheets, and manipulation of timekeeping records – **management threatened to call immigration enforcement on anyone filing a complaint.**

At another Taco Bell, workers faced age discrimination and harassment from a store manager who **said vile things throughout the day into the headsets that workers wear – saying older workers are useless, that she “wants to see collagen,” that older workers are stupid and younger workers are smarter, and that she will be happier when the older workers are out and replaced with younger workers.** When the store manager cut their schedules and gave their worker hours to younger workers, one of the workers asked about the schedule cuts. The store manager responded that the District Manager told her **that she was going to send the “Migra” [immigration enforcement] after anyone who bothers her, and “If someone doesn’t like the schedule, Immigration should throw them out.”**

A McDonald’s worker describes that in late January 2026, management talked to her about immigration enforcement: “Management showed me a 4 or 5-page stapled document and told me to read it, but they only gave me a few minutes to look at it and they didn’t let me take pictures of it or have a copy. **Management told me the document was about ICE and that ‘if ICE enters the store, workers should run out of the store to their cars,’ and that the owner would ‘wash his hands’ of us.”**

FAST FOOD COUNCIL PRIORITY #5

Participate in the Fast Food Council

California is home to 630,000 fast food workers, and the vast majority do not know about the Fast Food Council and how to participate and make our voices heard.

Fast food workers suggest that the Council develop a process through which employers provide contact information for fast food workers, so that the Council can communicate directly with fast food workers and we can follow along and provide input.



I have been frying chicken for decades. I don't have enough money for an apartment, so I share a room with my son. I have no money for retirement. My body is tired and I am worried.

At one point I had 3 jobs at the same time. I know about the injustices that my coworkers and I face every day.

There is a lot that needs fixing in fast food.

I have been participating in the Union for 10 years, and this has given me the power to speak up and build power for fast food workers, so we can have a voice in what happens to us.

With the Fast Food Council, we have finally won a seat at the table. I have hope that we can start lifting up the whole industry, so the problems happening every day at fast food stores across the state can start getting fixed.

-Pablo, KFC worker, Fremont

Now Is The Time

Immigrants' rights – and workers' rights – are under attack nationally.

With the establishment of the first-in-the-nation Fast Food Council, California showed we can lead the way when it comes to workers having a voice, and solving problems.

Fast Food Council meetings have been incredibly well-attended, with many hundreds of workers and employers participating. But the Fast Food Council has not met in over a year, and workers cannot wait.

The successful implementation of the fast food minimum wage has clearly shown that when fast food workers win, the fast food industry wins too.

Now is the time for the Fast Food Council to fulfill its mission, developing minimum standards to solve our most pressing problems. Through innovative policies and approaches at the Fast Food Council, we can show that California does not just resist what is wrong, we build what is right.



The Fast Food Council matters. It matters that workers like me have a voice, and that employers hear us.

We deeply appreciate the work of Governor Newsom in setting the standards and ground rules for our industry. We look forward to continuing our work together to find solutions.

-Matilde, fast food worker, Los Angeles

Endnotes

1. Governor Gavin Newsom, “2026 State of the State Address,” California, January 8, 2026, <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2026/01/08/governor-newsom-delivers-final-state-of-the-state-address-honoring-californias-past-and-reaffirming-a-brighter-future-for-all/>.
2. Michael Hiltzik, “Column: The fast-food industry claims the California minimum wage law is costing jobs. Its numbers are fake.” Los Angeles Times, June 12, 2024, <https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2024-06-12/the-fast-food-industry-claims-the-california-minimum-wage-law-is-costing-jobs-its-numbers-are-fake>.
3. Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages - Bureau of Labor Statistics, Private, NAICS 722513 Limited-service restaurants, and NAICS 722515 Snack and nonalcoholic beverage bars, California https://data.bls.gov/cew/apps/table_maker/v4/table_maker.htm#type=17&from=2020&to=2025&qtr=1&own=5&ind=722513&area=06000&supp=1 and https://data.bls.gov/cew/apps/table_maker/v4/table_maker.htm#type=17&from=2020&to=2025&qtr=1&own=5&ind=722515&area=06000&supp=1.
4. Michael Reich and Denis Sosinskiy, A \$20 Minimum Wage: Effects on Wages, Employment and Prices, UC Berkeley Center on Wage and Employment Dynamics, September 4, 2025. <https://irle.berkeley.edu/publications/working-papers/sectoral-wage-setting-in-california/> and Naser Hamdi, and David Sovich, The Wage and Employment Effects of California’s Fast-Food Minimum Wage (March(March 28, 2025), p. 17. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5197571>.
5. Analysis of FY 2024 operating income data from S&P Capital IQ. List of corporations compiled by 1. Identifying fast food companies publicly traded on a U.S. exchange whose brands have at least 200 locations in California and 2. taking the top 10 by market capitalization.
6. California Fast Food Workers Union, “The Fast Food Council”, <https://californiafastfoodworkersunion.org/about/the-fast-food-council/>.
7. Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages - Bureau of Labor Statistics, Private, NAICS 722513 Limited-service restaurants, and NAICS 722515 Snack and nonalcoholic beverage bars, California https://data.bls.gov/cew/apps/table_maker/v4/table_maker.htm#type=17&from=2020&to=2025&qtr=1&own=5&ind=722513&area=06000&supp=1 and https://data.bls.gov/cew/apps/table_maker/v4/table_maker.htm#type=17&from=2020&to=2025&qtr=1&own=5&ind=722515&area=06000&supp=1.
8. California Fast Food Workers Union records, March 1, 2026.
9. Cal/OSHA Complaint filed May 1, 2024.
10. Letter to Los Angeles City Councilmember Ysabel J. Jurado, December 8, 2025.
11. Cal/OSHA Complaint filed April 25, 2025.
12. Wage Theft Complaint filed with the Labor Commissioner’s Office, November 22, 2024.
13. Wage Theft Complaint filed with the Labor Commissioner’s Office, August 5, 2025. Cal/OSHA Complaint filed July 23, 2025.
14. Complaint filed with the Retaliation Complaint Investigation Unit, November 22, 2024.
15. There are 40 California municipalities with minimum wages different from the state minimum wage, indexed in some way to inflation, see UC Berkeley, California City and County Minimum Wages, January 1, 2026, <https://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/inventory-of-us-city-and-county-minimum-wage-ordinances/#s-2>. Of these, all 40 are indexed.
16. McDonald’s Corp. Definitive Proxy, Fiscal Year 2024, p. 73. <https://www.sec.gov/ix?doc=/Archives/edgar/data/0000063908/000155837025004544/mcd-20250520xdef14a.htm>; YUM Brands Definitive Proxy, Fiscal Year 2024, p. 87, <https://www.sec.gov/ix?doc=/Archives/edgar/data/0001041061/000095017025051113/yum-20250403.htm>; The Wendy’s Company Definitive Proxy, Fiscal Year 2024, p. 76. <https://www.sec.gov/ix?doc=/Archives/edgar/data/0000030697/000119312525072382/d879104ddef14a.htm>.
17. Complaint filed with the California Civil Rights Department, December 9, 2025.

18. California Fast Food Workers Union, Analysis of US Bureau of Labor Statistics - Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, May 2023, https://www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes_ca.htm-00-0000. Accessed February 2025. Note: Included in this analysis are worker counts for the following occupations in California: all “Fast Food & Counter Workers” and “Fast food cooks”; and “Cashiers” and “Drivers/sales workers” under NAICS code 722500 - Restaurants and Other Eating Places only (excluding the estimated percentage of workers in each of these occupations who work in full-service restaurants, as opposed to limited service restaurants). For these calculations, “First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers” and “Food Service Managers” were categorized as management occupations and excluded from the total.
19. Jeremy Thompson, “Demographic Profile of Fast Food Workers in California,” September 26, 2025, pp 10-11.
20. Jeremy Thompson, “Demographic Profile of Fast Food Workers in California,” September 26, 2025, p 13.
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California Fast Food Workers Union, SEIU

The California Fast Food Workers Union, SEIU unites fast food workers across brands and locations, and it is the first of its kind in the country. This historic union builds on the 10 years of workers organizing in the state, which began with the Fight for \$15 and a Union. Our Union is fighting to achieve racial and economic justice and transform fast food jobs in the Golden State by fighting for fair pay, safe and healthy workplaces and a voice for all workers in the fast food industry. Through our fight for a voice on the job, we're showing low wage workers everywhere that when we organize, strike, and build a movement, we all can win a seat at the table and improve lives and our communities.

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