

DUE: Wednesday April 23, 2025 by 5pm to Assembly Education Committee (hearing date has been moved to Apr 30, 2025)

Instructions

- 1. Make a copy of this template support letter and customize highlighted sections (delete these instructions before submitting).**
- 2. Submit your support letter to the CA position portal (create an account if needed): <https://calegislation.lc.ca.gov/Advocates/>**
- 3. Email a copy to Lan Le at LLe@ajsocal.org**

(Organization Logo)

(Date)

The Honorable Al Muratsuchi
Chair, Assembly Education Committee
1020 N St, Room 159
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Support Assembly Bill 1351 (Ahrens) - Youth Employment System (YES)

On behalf of **(Organization Name)**, I write in strong support of AB 1351 (Ahrens) - Youth Employment System (YES). This bill takes a critical step to address child labor exploitation in California by directing the California Department of Education (CDE) to create a centralized work permit database, named the Youth Employment System (YES), to improve data collection, reporting, and oversight to protect minors in the workforce. Additionally, the bill requires all local educational agencies (LEAs) to submit work permit data to YES starting in the 2030–2031 school year.

(Add why your organization supports the bill.)

Nationwide, child labor violations have skyrocketed by 88% since 2019, and injury rates among workers minors nearly doubled from 2011 to 2020¹. Each year, 27,000 teenage workers need emergency room visits for severe workplace injuries². This problem is likely to worsen as Project

¹<https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2023/10/19/child-labor-violations-2023>

²<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/young-workers/charts/index.html>

2025 plans to make it easier for employers to hire children for hazardous jobs by allowing states to opt out of federal child labor laws.

Three years ago in Los Angeles, eight Guatemalan children, some as young as 14, faced hazardous conditions in two poultry processing plants. Rather than attending school, these children used sharp knives to debone chicken in a cold warehouse for up to 12 hours a day, six days a week. None could speak English or Spanish. This case underscores how immigrant children, particularly unaccompanied migrant youths, are vulnerable to labor exploitation. Young immigrant workers are more likely to work in dangerous occupations and have lower educational attainment than US-born workers.³ Several unaccompanied minors have suffered severe injuries or even lost their lives as a result of being employed in hazardous conditions. A recent New York Times investigation uncovered at least a dozen cases of underage migrant workers killed on the job since 2017.

Increasing immigration enforcement will also result in the separation of mixed-status families, compelling teenagers to become the primary breadwinners. This situation leaves them highly vulnerable to labor exploitation due to immense economic pressure, limited employment opportunities, and educational disruption.

Work permits have proven effective in reducing child labor violations. States with work permits have 15.5% fewer child labor violation cases and 35.2% fewer minors involved in these cases compared to states without permits. Furthermore, work permit requirements have resulted in nearly 30% lower civil penalties per minor involved in violations, suggesting these requirements help prevent more serious forms of child labor exploitation⁴.

As a result, we must modernize the work permit system by transitioning it to a digital Youth Employment System (YES) under the California Department of Education. This would ensure that all enforcement agencies have immediate access to relevant information, enabling them to identify high-risk workplaces and allocate limited inspection resources more effectively. Additionally, it would provide crucial insights into the impact of labor participation on a child's academic success, socioeconomic outcomes, and career readiness.

Accurate data on the number of children working is essential to address this problem effectively. By collecting and analyzing this data, we can gain a clear understanding of the scope and nature of child labor, enabling us to design targeted interventions that address the root causes of poverty and exploitation. This data-driven approach ensures that our policies are not only more efficient but also more equitable, as they can be tailored to meet the specific needs of different communities.

³ Pia M. Orrenius and Madeline Zavodny, "Do Immigrants Work in Riskier Jobs?" *Demography* 46, no. 3 (August 2009): 535–551, <https://doi.org/10.1353/dem.0.0064>.

⁴<https://www.epi.org/blog/new-research-shows-that-work-permits-reduce-child-labor-violations-state-legislators-must-strengthen-not-eliminate-youth-work-permits/>

As the largest state economy in the U.S., California sets trends for labor practices nationwide. This is especially important given that 31 states have introduced bills to weaken child labor protections since 2021.⁵ By adopting AB 1351, California can take a decisive stand against child labor exploitation and lead the nation in protecting minors in the workforce. YES will eliminate discrepancies in data collection and improve visibility into youth employment trends and their impact on academic performance, ensuring better oversight and accountability. California's implementation of YES not only fortifies its own safeguards but also sets an actionable standard for other states to follow, proving that modernized data systems are essential to protecting minors and preventing exploitation nationwide.

We urge you to support AB 1351 (Ahrens) to protect vulnerable children across California. By directing the California Department of Education (CDE) to create a centralized work permit database called YES, we can demonstrate our commitment to protecting the most vulnerable and providing them with the support they need to thrive.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

[Name]

[Organization]

[Contact information]

⁵ <https://www.epi.org/research/child-labor/>