



PRESS STATEMENT

May 24, 2023

Contact: Hannah Halbert
hhalbert@policymattersohio.org
614.397.6080

Policy Matters applauds Cuyahoga County Council for passing wage theft ordinance

Cuyahoga County Council passed an ordinance Tuesday to strengthen wage theft protections, a move that will debar employers who steal from their workers from doing business with the county and help county residents make ends meet. Over the past several months, the [Guardians for Fair Work](#) coalition, which includes Policy Matters Ohio, has advocated for this step with support and leadership from Councilmember Dale Miller, the primary sponsor, as well as Councilmembers Jones, Kelley, Simon, Stephens, Sweeney, Tuma and Turner. Policy Matters Ohio Executive Director Hannah Halbert released the following statement about the ordinance:

“Across race and place, Ohioans are coming together to stand up for working people. More and more leaders are listening — and standing with us. In Columbus, Cleveland, and now throughout Cuyahoga County, the people are passing laws that reflect our values and hold unscrupulous employers accountable. The Guardians for Fair Work are on a roll, but the fight to end wage theft is far from over.

“It won’t be over until every working person is paid the full amount for all the hours we put in on the job. Too many employers still believe that cheating their workers is worth the risk — and without strong laws and well-resourced enforcement, too many are correct.

“The COVID-19 pandemic and recovery proved that our economy depends on the contributions of all working people — from the janitors who clean our office buildings to C-suite executives. This ordinance is an important signal that leaders in Cuyahoga County recognize the inherent value and dignity of all work.”

Facts about wage theft:

- Wage theft occurs when employers pay less than minimum wage; withhold overtime pay; fail to pay for all hours worked; or misclassify workers either as salaried workers not covered by overtime, or as independent contractors not protected by labor laws.
- Wage theft costs Ohio workers [in excess of \\$600 million a year](#) and nationally exceeds the cost of property crimes including robberies, burglaries and other thefts.
- Ohio employers steal from an estimated [213,000 workers a year](#) by paying them less than the state or federal minimum wage. The average victim loses 24% of their take-home pay: nearly \$2,900 if they stay on the job a full year.
- Three in five Ohio wage theft victims paid less than the minimum wage are women.
- Nonnative English speakers are much more likely to be victims of wage theft.
- Black and white workers experience wage theft at a similar rate, but employers steal more money from Black workers, who tend to have fewer options to leave a job after experiencing wage theft.

Policy Matters Ohio is a nonprofit, nonpartisan state policy research institute with offices in Cleveland and Columbus.