

FACT SHEET



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Strengthen child labor protections

Support HB 100. Support HB 100, patroned by Delegate Siebold, to increase penalties for child labor violations and protect young workers against retaliation.

Problem: Rampant, abusive child labor was common place in the USA until the 1930's. Since then, state and federal law have served the important role of ensuring youth can be employed in a way that does not harm their health or education. Unfortunately, child labor violations have increased dramatically in recent years- 37 percent nationally in the last year alone. In Virginia **FOIA data on child labor violations showed that child labor cases almost tripled from 2021-2022.** Young workers have much higher rates of non-fatal injuries on the job than adults and the highest rates of injuries that require emergency department attention.

Policy solutions: Many mechanisms are needed to ensure young people are empowered and protected in the workplace, including appropriate civil monetary penalties for employers who violate the law. Virginia's civil monetary penalties for child labor laws are woefully low and many have not been updated in decades. In addition, they are rarely if ever utilized to their maximum allowable limit. This means that **rather than serving as an economic disincentive, these fines are simply the cost of doing business.** Additionally, A national survey found that 43 percent of workers who complained to their employers were subjected to illegal retaliation. Raising the civil monetary penalties for all child labor violations, adding minimum penalty amounts, and ensuring young people can report violations without fear of retaliation will be crucial steps forward to protecting young workers.

Who benefits:

Youth – For many young people, employment is necessary to provide for themselves, their families, and their future.

Current law allows those as young as 14 to work in a broad range of jobs like retail, hospitality, and more.

There are, however, important limitations on dangerous work and excessive working hours that seek to balance allowing youth to be employed while continuing to work on their studies, hobbies, and social development. Protecting and strengthening current child labor laws will ensure all youth can have the benefits of employment without sacrificing their safety and development.

Economy – A healthy economy is supported by a healthy and educated incoming workforce. By ensuring that youth are employed in ways that increase their educational attainment, Virginia is guaranteed to remain a top state for business.

Businesses – Undermining youth health in employment also undermines businesses. When a business is using unfair labor practices to increase their bottom line, it is hard for other businesses to compete. Commonsense changes to Virginia law will allow more youth to be safely employed while ensuring the future of Virginia's educated workforce.

Our youth are our future!

Everyone benefits from strengthening child labor protections. A well-educated and well-adjusted future workforce is the foundation for innovation. By strengthening current child labor protections, Virginia can safeguard it's position as a top state for business and education.

Sources: CDC, Economic Policy Institute, National Employment Law Project, UCLA Institute for Research and Employment, Center for Urban Economic Development, US DOL