Testimony of Acting Deputy Commissioner Elizabeth Wagoner New York City Department of Consumer and Worker Protection

Before the Committee on Consumer and Worker Protection

Hearing on Introductions 613 and 640

September 19, 2022

Introduction

Good morning, Chair Velázquez, and members of the Committee. My name is Elizabeth Wagoner, Acting Deputy Commissioner at the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP) for the Office of Labor Policy and Standards. I am joined by Carlos Ortiz, Senior Advisor for Policy and Intergovernmental Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Introductions 613 and 640, relating to penalties for violations of the Fair Workweek Law and trainings for certain fast food workers.

The Fair Workweek Law for Fast Food Workers

In 2017, the Council passed first of its kind legislation to provide fair scheduling protections to workers in the retail and fast food industries. In 2020, Council passed legislation to amend and strengthen the Fair Workweek Law, adding protections to provide greater job stability for fast food workers. For today's discussion I'll be focusing on the fast food provisions of the Fair Workweek Law.

The Fair Workweek Law gives fast food workers scheduling stability and an opportunity to move into full-time work. These rights include:

- A stable, regular schedule that does not change significantly from week to week;
- 14 days' advance notice of each weekly work schedule;
- The opportunity to say "no" to working extra time;
- Premium pay for schedule changes;
- Premium pay and an opportunity to say "no" to clopening shifts;
- The opportunity to work more regular hours before new employees are hired; and
- Protections against arbitrary termination or loss of hours.¹

In New York City, there are more than 67,000 workers employed in the fast-food industry.² In our enforcement work, we've heard from thousands of these workers about their need for the regular, predictable schedules that the Fair Workweek Law provides. Many of the New Yorkers covered by this law are parents, with young children to take to school in the morning and pick up in the evening. Some are working towards high school or college degrees, and need to arrange their work schedules around their class schedules and to be able to leave on time. Some are

¹ <u>See</u> Local Laws <u>99</u>, <u>100</u>, <u>106</u>, and <u>107</u> of 2017.

² https://s27147.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/Just-Cause-February-2019.pdf

active in religious organizations, and need predictable scheduling to attend their community's services.

Since the Fair Workweek Law went into effect, DCWP has received over 300 complaints from, launched more than 150 investigations, and recovered approximately \$22 million in restitution for more than 16,000 workers and \$1.3 million in civil penalties in the fast food industry alone. We are very proud of these recoveries, not only because they put money back in workers' pockets for harms they have experienced, but because they also create a deterrent effect that is increasingly making companies take a hard look at their compliance practices to ensure they are doing right by their workers and complying with the law.

I'd like to give you a picture of what the enforcement process behind those numbers looks like. When we receive a complaint about a violation of the Fair Workweek Law, we make a determination about the appropriate scope of the investigation. Our investigators conduct detailed interviews with complainants to make that assessment and tailor the investigation to the scope of the violations the complainant is reporting. For example, a worker may report that their employer usually posts work schedules one week in advance and does not post or email available open shifts at all. These are violations that affect all workers in that workplace, not just that complainant. With a complaint like that, we would open an investigation covering all workers affected by that alleged unlawful conduct, not just the complainant. If the restaurant employing that complainant has other locations, we'll also look into the appropriate geographic scope. Sometimes the complainant has worked at multiple locations under the same corporate umbrella, or knows workers in other locations, or has other information indicating the alleged unlawful conduct is company-wide. When that happens, our investigation would cover multiple business locations under the corporate umbrella.

During our investigations, we obtain records from the company about their compliance practices, which our teams of investigators, data scientists, and attorneys work together to analyze. We also reach out to workers by text message and email to gather information from them about their experiences with predictable scheduling. Putting all of this information together, we identify violations and the workers affected and present our findings to the company. Under the law, violations are counted on a per worker, per instance basis. Worker relief for most violations is either \$200 or \$300 per instance, and civil penalties are \$500 per instance. For companies with poor levels of compliance, there can be multiple violations per worker, per worker, per worker, and the totals in relief and penalties can go into the millions of dollars.

We generally give companies an opportunity to resolve our investigation through a settlement negotiation, which results in a Consent Order with us that requires the company to come into compliance, pay monetary relief to workers in specific amounts, and pay civil penalties to the city. Most of our cases are resolved in this way. We settle cases because our enforcement priorities are swift monetary relief for affected workers and bringing companies into compliance. If a company does not want to enter into a Consent Order to resolve an investigation, we will file a petition at the Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings and try the case; DCWP does not have adjudicatory power to find violations on its own. To provide a recent example of the effectiveness of this process, I'd like to highlight our settlement last month with Chipotle for violations of the Fair Workweek and Paid Safe and Sick Leave laws. That agreement will deliver up to \$20 million in compensation to approximately 13,000 workers. It is the largest worker protection settlement in New York City history, and the largest Fair Workweek settlement in the country.³

DCWP pairs its strong enforcement with proactive outreach. In partnership with communitybased organizations, workers' rights groups, and restaurant trade associations, our outreach team seeks to ensure that both workers and employers understand the details of the Fair Workweek Law. Since 2020, DCWP has conducted 60 events highlighting the Fair Workweek Law, connecting with more than 4,000 workers.

Introductions 613 and 640

Today's hearing concerns legislation that seeks to amend the Fair Workweek Law. Introduction 613 would double civil penalties for second and subsequent violations of the law and double the allowable civil penalty from \$15,000 to \$30,000 for a pattern or practice of violations. Also, certain businesses in violation of the Fair Workweek or Paid Safe and Sick Leave Laws could have their Food Service Establishment permit suspended or revoked by the Health Department at DCWP's direction.

Introduction 640 would require DCWP to develop a training on municipal workplace laws for fast food workers. DCWP would have discretion over when to require an employer to make their employees available for training. DCWP could also designate an outside organization to conduct the training.

We are always happy to work with the Council on legislation that promotes a culture of compliance with municipal workplace laws. To that end, we are encouraged that these bills can work in concert to further this goal. Education is a cornerstone of compliance, so that workers know when a violation is occurring and how to report it. We look forward to working with the Council to ensure any training program is accessible, accurately provides information to workers, and effectively accomplishes the goals of the legislation.

However, with respect to civil penalties in the Fair Workweek Law, we do feel that the current civil penalty amounts are appropriate and effective tools to deter noncompliance. Increasing the civil penalty amounts payable to the City would not be in line with our enforcement practices, which prioritize payment of monetary relief to individual workers over payment of civil penalties to the City.

Conclusion

I would like to thank the Council for today's hearing and its commitment to addressing problems impacting workers in the fast food industry. DCWP is proud of its work enforcing the Fair Workweek Law and other municipal workplace protections, and welcomes continued

³ <u>https://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/581-22/mayor-adams-department-consumer-worker-protection-settlement-chipotle-mexican#/0</u>

collaboration with industry stakeholders, workers' advocates, and the Council to create stronger protections for New York City's workers, as well as ensuring that workers know their rights and are made whole for violations of the law.

I look forward to our discussion and any questions you may have.



Testimony on Behalf of the National Restaurant Association Regarding Intro 0613-2022 and Intro 0640-2022

New York City Council Committee on Consumer and Worker Protection September 19, 2022

> Testimony Submitted by: Michael Ambrose Manager, State & Local Affairs National Restaurant Association Mambrose@restaurant.org



Chair Marjorie Velázquez and Members of the Consumer and Worker Protection Committee:

On behalf of the National Restaurant Association and our New York City members, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on these important bills, Intro 0613-2022 and Intro 0640-2022. The National Restaurant Association is the leading business association for the restaurant industry, which comprises nearly 1 million restaurant and foodservice outlets and a workforce of 14.5 million employees nationwide. Together with 52 State and Territory Associations, we are a network of professional organizations dedicated to serving every restaurant through advocacy, education, and food safety.

We are committed as an industry to working with the Council to create an environment where restaurants of all sizes and formats can thrive in the city. However, the National Restaurant Association and our partners at the New York State Restaurant Association have concerns regarding these bills. While we share the desire to ensure that employees receive proper training and that businesses abide by all applicable city, state, and federal laws, these proposed bills impose additional burdens on an industry that is still emerging from the pandemic and that faces incredible challenges in the current business environment.

Since the city's scheduling laws were implemented in 2017, restaurants have worked diligently to comply with regulations that are at times confusing. We fully support penalizing bad actors; however, there are rare occasions where unintended human mistakes or technical errors with scheduling software can lead to violations. The current fine structure requires that a failure to offer hours to a single employee at one location leads to penalties that are multiplied by the total number of employees citywide, resulting in fines in excess of half a million dollars. Under the new regulations proposed by Intro 0613-2002, such a scenario could lead to suspension, non-renewal, or revocation of a business license. In addition, the doubling of fines for a second violation within two years and increase of civil penalties to \$30,000, could be devastating for both corporate owned locations and local franchisees that operate on extremely thin margins. These new fines and penalties could have the unintended consequence of employees losing their

jobs if multi-unit chain restaurants close down either due to a business license revocation or the business being unable to afford the steep fines. We want to work with the Council to avoid either scenario.

We are also concerned that Intro 0640-2022 takes the unprecedented step of allowing the city to dictate when employees can be called out of work and sent to an off-site facility to receive training that can be administered by activist groups rather than government employees.

We are eager to work with the city to ensure proper training and ask that the bill be amended to allow employers to incorporate supplemental material provided by the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection into existing training programs. Such a change would ensure that employees are receiving the necessary training without adding unreasonable burdens on businesses.

Thank you for your consideration and we are available to discuss how we can work with the Council to find common ground without creating additional burdens on the city's restaurant industry.

Respectfully yours,

Michael Ambrose Manager, State & Local Affairs National Restaurant Association Mambrose@restaurant.org



New York City Council Committee on Consumer and Worker Protection Hearing on Intros. 613 and 640 September 19, 2022 Testimony from the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute

Good morning, Chair Velázquez and members of the Committee on Consumer and Worker Protection. I am Melanie Kruvelis, a Research Associate at the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute. The CUNY Food Policy Institute (CUFPI) is an academic research and action center at the CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy, and provides evidence, policy analysis, advocacy and assistance to help solve urban food problems. Today, I speak on behalf of CUFPI to express our support of Intros 613 and 640.

While the passage of these two bills would bring benefits to fast food workers across the city, our testimony will focus on their impact on the 40,000 CUNY students who work in the food industry while in college. An April 2021 survey found that 17 percent of CUNY students work in the food sector, making it the largest single employment sector for our students. CUNY also trains more people to work in the food sector than any other university in the country. Working in the food sector is a common choice for CUNY and other college students who need to work, because part-time jobs are available, scheduling can be flexible, and many jobs are available in neighborhoods where students live.

Our institute is conducting a study of CUNY students who work in the food industry while enrolled in school. As part of that project, our research team recently interviewed 20 CUNY students who are also food workers. They identified several ways that working in food — and specifically, fast food — makes it harder to focus on school, make progress on their degree, and graduate.

First, violations of the city's Fair Workweek Law forced students to miss class, fall behind on assignments, or give up on school work altogether. Students we spoke with reported that their employers would change schedules at the last minute, either to close the store at the end of the day, or to replace an absent worker. One student explained how an erratic work schedule led them to drop to part-time enrollment in school: *"I switched my schedule to part-time because I didn't want to have to juggle and then have that anxious 'I'm failing my classes, I can't balance it feeling. So I didn't even try it. If I'm working this much, I'm gonna do part-time."* Research shows that part-time students are much less likely to complete their degree than those enrolled full-time.

Other students told us about the many physical and psychological health challenges they face in their food jobs. These include requirements for heavy lifting; inadequate protection against kitchen injuries or burns; repetitive strain injuries; sexual harassment from employers, fellow workers, or customers; and, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, inadequate access to personal protective equipment (PPE) and other risks of infection from co-workers or customers

as well customer harrassment in response to COVID-19 health and safety regulations. Many students noted the lack of safety education, or any information on their rights as workers — endangering workers, colleagues, and customers. One student told us: "I worked there sick all the time. I had a stomach flu in January of 2020. I was there throwing up in the bathroom downstairs, and I was there because the restaurant owner had to go on a date that night." Another student talked about how physical exhaustion from food work interfered with school: "The challenge is the shifts are long and you're on your feet. So physically, I'm challenged. Physically, my body is tired. And when my body is tired, it is difficult to focus on [school] work."

For these reasons, we support Intro 613, which will strengthen enforcement of the Fair Work Week Law, better protecting CUNY students who are food workers and their colleagues from unfair demands to work irregular hours and make last minute changes in their work schedule. We also support Intro 640, which will require workers' rights training for certain categories of fast food workers. Passing this legislation will ensure that CUNY students who are food workers — as well as other fast food workers — will be educated about their rights, and better able to protect themselves against threats to health they encounter in the workplace. We encourage the passage of both bills, and also urge the Committee to fight for funding at the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP), ensuring that DCWP is equipped to handle additional complaints that result from increased worker education.

Our research shows that the nature of fast food work makes it harder for many working students to complete their education. We remind the Committee of the stakes of that: college students who fail to graduate lose the lifetime economic, health and social benefits that a postsecondary degree confers. In addition, students' families, their community, and the taxpayers of New York lose the economic, social, and other benefits that come from having a better educated and credentialed workforce.

A food system that supports health, equity and a sustainable thriving city has to ensure that the hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers who work in the food sector are adequately protected against unfair scheduling and workplace threats to health. Passing Intro 613 and 640 will make an important contribution to achieving that goal, and help CUNY students who are food workers reach their full potential.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. For questions about our testimony and research, please reach out to Dr. Nicholas Freudenberg at <u>Nick.Freudenberg@sph.cuny.edu</u>.

This testimony was prepared by Nicholas Freudenberg, Distinguished Professor of Public Health and Senior Faculty Fellow at the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute (CUFPI); Melanie Kruvelis, CUFPI Research Associate; Emma Vignola, CUFPI Doctoral Fellow; and Luis Saavedra, CUFPI Research Associate. The Director of the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute is Nevin Cohen, Associate Professor of Public Health. For more on this topic, see our <u>March 2022</u> <u>report</u>, "Protecting Those Who Feed Us: How Employers, Government, and Workers" Organizations Can Protect the Health, Safety, and Economic Security of Food Workers During COVID-19 and Beyond." *Find out more about us at <u>cunyurbanfoodpolicv.org</u>.*

<u>Testimony Submitted to the</u> <u>New York City Council Committee on Consumer and Worker Protection Regarding Intro 613 and</u> <u>Intro 640 by the National Fast Casual Coalition</u> <u>Monday, September 19th, 2022 at 10am</u>

Chair Velazquez and Members of the New York City Council Committee on Consumer and Worker Protection, this testimony is submitted by the National Fast Casual Coalition ("NFC Coalition") working in conjunction with the broader restaurant industry, a group of New York City's largest national corporate-owned restaurants which employs over 5,000 New Yorkers and serves thousands of New Yorkers every day. We are grateful to the Council for holding this hearing and considering our views.

At the outset, we would like to establish that we unequivocally support the core objectives of the Fair Work Week Law ("FWWL"): a) providing employees with predictable schedules and b) prioritizing full time employment for any employee who wants it.

Further, our clients have learned a great deal about compliance and implementation of the FWWL requirements and we are pleased to report our clients have invested millions in technology as well as training of store leadership in order to comply with both the spirit and the letter of the law. However, compliance concerns remain due to inadvertent mistakes at the store level rather than the corporate level. Accordingly, we ask you to consider revising the FWWL and the pending provisions to enable real-time compliance in fast casual stores that serves the workers, the store managers (many of whom started as team members and have been internally promoted) as well as our customers.

Perfect technical compliance, is, candidly, near impossible due to the "human" nature of serving food to customers. Excessive penalties for failed record keeping and multi-store shift postings, cannot eliminate an occasional store manager error, particularly with a law this complex and nuanced. Excessive fines and penalties will stop restaurant expansion, put stores out of business and sadly, as Intro 640 explicitly contemplates, put workers on the street with two weeks' pay even though the substantive FWWL objectives are being met. We hope the Council will consider changes to the FWWL to allow fast casual restaurants to continue to grow in New York City as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background and Current Challenges

When the FWWL was enacted in 2017 it took many companies time to achieve even baseline compliance. There was training and technology that took time to develop in order to comply with the law. We acknowledge that there was not enough attention paid to record-keeping. As of last year, in some cases much earlier, the technology has been implemented and all restaurants have policies and procedures in place at the corporate level to comply with the FWWL. Despite this corporate level of compliance, there are still one-off, inadvertent mistakes and errors that occur for very human and understandable reasons.

Local store managers must, among many other managerial tasks, manage the compliance with FWWL. Even with the right systems and training, occasional errors can and do occur. Additionally, technology solutions have gaps, and changes or fixes take time to implement which may make companies vulnerable to unfair accusations of non-compliance as a result of a failure from their technology service partner. On top of that, retaining and hiring workers right now is extremely challenging and is probably the most challenging labor environment we have ever experienced. Adding additional requirements, such as requiring the workers to attend offsite training, does not help.

Our clients value the workers who are the frontline of customer service each and every day. Each has a program to promote from within so that somebody starting on the grill, the counter or in the kitchen can become a store manager. These companies are very proud of the dedication and commitment the workers and store managers showed during the worst of the pandemic. FWWL compliance is one of many things that managers need to focus on. In addition to FWWL compliance, managers also have to focus on food safety, store cleanliness, customer service satisfaction employee management among other things. We must support the in-store infrastructure to enable managers to be "team leaders" -- not simply compliance technicians -- in helping workers achieve their potential both in skill and in pay and of course to serve the customers.

We assure you our clients share your goals for their workers. We simply ask that you take some time to visit our restaurants and speak to some managers -- good people working in the New York restaurant world and trying to serve the people who ultimately pay the bills: customers.

Finally, as you well know, the fast-food restaurant world divides into franchisees and corporate stores. We ask you to recognize that corporate store managers are just like franchise retail store managers: small business operators striving to succeed.

Proposed Changes

To address the challenges stated above, we propose the following changes:

Intro 613

As human error can occur on the store level every so often, the law should distinguish between errors at individual locations versus patterns of non-compliance happening "city wide" coming from corporate level. We are not asking for any leniency for bad corporate headquarters behavior or lax centralized efforts to comply with the law.

Intro 640

To remove the travel burden on employees, and to increase corporate accountability, and to preserve good communications between managers and employees, as well as to minimize government expense, we request that companies be required in lieu of the city to provide on-site FWWL training. We accept there will be compliance monitoring and if the City is concerned about the contents of the training, DCWP can provide materials to be used in training.

Additional Changes

Outside of the two new bills being heard today we would also request that the Council:

- Amend the schedule change provisions of the FWWL to mirror the retail version of the FWWL, where the lookback period is based on the date of the shift, not the date of work schedule issuance for calculating premium pay.
- Allow employers to adapt schedules due to temporary business fluctuations (e.g. Summer weekends, holiday schedules in December), early closures, late openings etc. without violating the 15% rule under the "just cause" law.
- Reduce misinformation by dropping the requirement that the word "discharge" be used when an hours reduction notice is issued in order not to terrify workers who naturally and logically fear that they are being discharged when they are not.
- When an employee is properly terminated for cause, it is not appropriate to require premium pay for any missed shifts as a result of the termination.
- Allow for creation of a voluntary standby lists like what exists in other cities with scheduling laws.

In summary, with a few small changes to the FWWL we believe that the Council can meet its goal of advancing workers' rights as well as allowing business to successfully operating and grow their businesses in New York City and continue to create jobs and great customer experiences for all New Yorkers.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on these important issues.

TESTIMONY OF TSEDEYE GEBRESELASSIE DIRECTOR OF WORK QUALITY & SENIOR STAFF ATTORNEY, NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT LAW PROJECT

NYC COUNCIL – COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER & WORKER PROTECTION SEPTEMBER 19, 2022

The National Employment Law Project (NELP) is a national nonprofit advocacy organization that for more than 50 years has sought to build a just and inclusive economy where all workers have expansive rights and thrive in good jobs. We partner with federal, state, and local lawmakers and local community-based groups on a wide range of workforce issues, including areas such as minimum wage, fair scheduling, unemployment insurance, wage and hour enforcement and workplace protections for excluded and underpaid workers.

We are pleased to have the opportunity to testify today in support of Int. 613, which would raise penalties for repeat violators of the Fair Workweek (FWW) law and allow the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP) to direct the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) to suspend, revoke, deny or refuse to renew the licenses of employers that have failed to pay a fine or penalty for a FWW violation, engaged in a pattern or practice of violations, or been ordered to pay \$500,00 of more in penalties for PWW violations. NELP also supports Int. 640, which would charge DCWP with conducting trainings for employees of fast food employers on their rights under Fair Workweek, Just Cause, and other city employment laws. Employers would be required to pay employees for the time spent in these trainings. Int. 640 would allow DCWP to work with a workers' rights organization to provide trainings.

New York City's Fair Workweek law has gone a long way towards raising standards for the city's fast food work force, who have long struggled with unpredictable hours, last minute schedule changes, and a dearth of full time hours. By requiring employers to provide workers with schedules two weeks in advance, limiting last-minute schedule changes, and requiring that employers give current part-time employees access to more shifts before hiring new staff, the law has given workers more ability to plan for child care and school and to get more full time hours to better support their families. Inadequate enforcement provisions in the law, however, have allowed employers to evade these standards. Int. 640 and would give DCWP the tools to rein in abuses and protect this vital but low-wage workforce.

Despite important gains, fast food workers continue to suffer low wages and abusive scheduling practices.

New York City's 3,000 fast-food locations employ more than 67,000 people, two-thirds of whom are women, two-thirds immigrants, and 88 percent people of color.¹ This workforce has typically not only struggled with low wages, but has also has to contend with high rates of involuntary part-time work and wage theft. Record-high inflation has exacerbated conditions for low-wage workers, with the price of basic necessities rising at the fastest pace in 40 years.² Even while costs soar, however, the minimum wage for New York City workers has stagnated at \$15 per hour since 2018.

¹ "Fired on a Whim: The Precarious Existence for NYC's Fast Food Workers" (Center for Popular Democracy, Fast Food Justice, National Employment Law Project, SEIU 32BJ, Feb. 2019) available at https://s27147.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/Just-Cause-February-2019.pdf ¹ https://s27147.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/Just-Cause-February-2019.pdf ² https://station/why-new-york-needs-to-index-its-minimum-wage-now/

The FWW law has the potential to raise and stabilize fast food worker income, even in the face of stagnating minimum wage standards, by requiring employers to give employees sufficient advance notice of work schedules and offer them additional work hours before hiring new staff. But fast food industry leaders continue to routinely violate these critical laws. DCWP recently settled a large case against Chipotle, for example, for scheduling and paid sick leave violations that had affected some 13,000 workers over the course of several years.³ In fact, Chipotle continued to systematically violate both FWW and the city's Paid Safe and Sick Leave Laws for years even after DCWP initiated an investigation against the corporation.⁴

Fast food employers flout labor standards laws because they may calculate that the benefit of continuing current labor practices outweighs the chance and severity of enforcement. Most violations go undetected because the burden of reporting violations falls on fast food workers themselves, and workers may not know what their rights are or how to report violations, and face retaliation, including hours cuts and firings, for reporting violations.⁵ DCWP's limited resources constrict its ability to conduct broad outreach throughout the city, proactively investigate worksites in the absence of a pending complaint, and promptly respond to every complaint filed. Moreover, the current penalty scheme for FWW violations is so modest relative to fast food corporations' operating costs, and the risk of detection so law, that the corporations may well consider DCWP fines to simply be part of the cost of doing business in New York City.

Stronger penalties are needed to effectively deter fast food corporations from systematically violating their employees' rights.

The proposed laws would go a long way towards raising the cost of violations to a meaningful level more closely aligned to the corporations' size and resources and with the potential to effectively deter lawbreaking. FWW applies only to chain restaurants with 30 or more establishments nationally,⁶ that have already made a substantial investment in building out their businesses, including developing sophisticated scheduling software.⁷ And the industry is dominated by huge and profitable players. In fact, in 2021, the top seven publicly traded fast food companies earned \$16 billion in profits and paid out over \$12 billion to their shareholders in the form of stock buybacks and dividends.⁸

Incorporating a mechanism to suspend or revoke licenses for labor violations is a common-sense policy with long-standing precedent. Already, restaurants in New York City risk being shut down for health code violations, and they generally move quickly to correct the violations to minimize the loss of business and customers.⁹ The public has generally accepted the city's power in this regard as necessary towards protecting the well-being of its residents. The city should be able to employ a similar tool

³ Noam Scheiber, "Chipotle Agrees to Pay Over \$20 Million to Settle New York City Workplace Case (NY Times, Aug. 9, 2022), available at https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/09/business/economy/chipotle-labor-nyc.html?searchResultPosition=1.

⁴ Department of Consumer and Worker Protection v. Chipotle Mexican Grill, Inc., OATH Index No. 200501/18.

⁵ Irene Tung and Sanjay Pinto, "Power and Voice at Work: New Yorkers View Employer Retaliation as A Barrier to Addressing Workplace Problems and Express Desire for Union Representation" (National Employment Law Project, Aug. 10, 2021) available at https://www.nelp.org/publication/power-and-voice-at-work-new-yorkers-view-employer-retaliation-as-a-barrierto-addressing-workplaceproblems-and-express-desire-for-union-representation/.

⁶ NYC Admin. Code Sec. 20-1201.

⁷ Testimony of Joan Moriarty, NYC Council, March 3, 2017.

⁸ Data compiled by SEIU 32BJ on file with NELP.

⁹ Haeyoung Yoon, "Local and State Business Registration Schemes: An Enforcement Lever to Strengthen Employer Compliance with Labor Standards and to Facilitate Worker Organizing (Roosevelt Institute, Oct. 7, 2015), available at https://rooseveltinstitute.org/publications/local-and-state-business-registration-schemes-strengthen-employer-compliance-labor-standards-worker-organizing/.

where the welfare of a fast food establishment's workers is compromised. We can expect that the combined risk of stiffer fines for repeat violations and license loss will make employers adjust their costbenefit analysis when deciding whether to change their business practices to comply with scheduling requirements.

Laws conditioning business licenses on compliance with labor standards has precedent in other jurisdictions. Seattle, Washington; Chicago, Illinois; Somerville, Massachusetts; New Brunswick, NJ; Princeton, NJ; and Westchester County, NY have all passed local licensing laws that provide local governments with an additional powerful tool to prevent unscrupulous businesses with a history of wage theft and who pose a risk to workers and consumers from doing business in that jurisdiction.¹⁰

Trainings by trusted organizations are a critical element of FWW enforcement.

While DCWP has undertaken a robust public education and outreach effort and partnered with many workers' rights organizations to educate workers about their rights, many low-wage workers lack accurate information on their rights and how to enforce them. Employers have little incentive to make information on legal protections available to their workforce, and high turnover rates and highly dispersed workforces prevent workers from sharing information. Even when they do know what their rights are and have identified a violation, workers may be reluctant to report it because they fear retaliation. Trainings and workshops conducted by well-trained agency staff or community partners can go a long way towards getting key information to workers and giving them some assurance that they can safely report violations.

New York already partners closely with community organizations to play this role. The city contracts with several worker centers and legal service providers to conduct outreach and education to and represent low wage and immigrant workers in wage theft and other cases.¹¹ These efforts reach thousands of workers per year and have returned millions of dollars in unpaid wages to working families. The state Department of Labor has also engaged in promising partnerships: it contracted with community organizations around the state to conduct outreach and education to and help workers apply for the state's Excluded Worker Fund. Both efforts have taken advantage of the CBOs' close-ties, deep trust, and cultural competency with vulnerable communities. Continuing to engage in similar partnerships to train fast food workers about FWW and other protections would be an enormous help in preventing and combatting violations.

We thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Int. 613 and 640.

 ¹⁰ Laura Huizar, "How Changes to Home Improvement Licensing Laws in Westchester County Could Help Protect Workers," (NELP Aug. 2018) available at https://s27147.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/Home-Improvement-Licensing-Could-Help-Westchester-Workers.pdf.
 ¹¹ Thomas Power, Sarah Leberstein & Katisha Andrew, "How New York City Must Support Low-Wage Essential Workers as They Support Everyone Else" (Gotham Gazette, Aug. 29, 2021) available at https://www.gothamgazette.com/authors/130-opinion/10734-how-new-vork-city-must-support-low-wage-essential-workers.

Testimony of Charles Du NYC Council – Committee on Consumer & Worker Protection September 19, 2022

Local 32BJ SEIU is a union of 175,000 member across the East Coast and many other states. We are proud to have been a leader in the Fight for \$15 movement since it started 10 years ago. Fast food workers have been at the forefront of struggles for economic and racial justice and we've achieved so many successes in partnership with this City Council. We're here today to keep pushing this fight forward and to ensure that New York City continues to support its essential workers.

New York City's 3,000 fast-food locations employ more than 67,000 people, two-thirds of whom are women, two-thirds immigrants, and 88 percent people of color.¹ The Fair Workweek and Just Cause laws, which apply only to chain restaurants with 30 or more establishments nationally,² are meant to create stability for fast food workers by requiring large chains to provide stable, regular schedules and to offer open shifts to current workers before hiring new workers. They also require restaurants to engage in a progressive discipline process before firing someone. Together, these laws envision an industry that schedules its workers for consistent, full-time work that allows them to plan their lives and to make enough to live in this city.

Unfortunately, in the years since the laws' passage, we've seen employers ignore and violate these laws. DCWP recently settled a complaint against Chipotle in which the company agreed to pay \$20,000,000 to workers – and yet throughout this time, even after the case was brought against it, Chipotle continued to systematically violate these laws. We recently filed complaints on behalf of workers at over a dozen locations alleging unlawful reductions in their work schedules.

Chipotle and other fast food employers flout labor standards laws because they may calculate that the benefit of continuing current labor practices outweighs the chance and severity of enforcement. Most violations go undetected because the burden of reporting violations falls on fast food workers themselves, and workers may not know what their rights are or how to report violations, and face retaliation, including hours cuts and firings, for reporting violations.³ DCWP's limited resources constrict its ability to conduct broad outreach throughout the city, proactively investigate worksites in the absence of a pending complaint, and promptly respond to every complaint filed.

¹ "Fired on a Whim: The Precarious Existence for NYC's Fast Food Workers" (Center for Popular Democracy, Fast Food Justice, National Employment Law Project, SEIU 32BJ, Feb. 2019) available at <u>https://s27147.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/Just-Cause-February-2019.pdf</u> ² NYC Admin. Code Sec. 20-1201.

³ Irene Tung and Sanjay Pinto, "Power and Voice at Work: New Yorkers View Employer Retaliation as A Barrier to Addressing Workplace Problems and Express Desire for Union Representation" (National Employment Law Project, Aug. 10, 2021) available at

https://www.nelp.org/publication/power-and-voice-at-work-new-yorkers-view-employer-retaliation-as-a-barrierto-addressing-workplace-problems-and-express-desire-for-union-representation/.

So we're here today to tell the industry that we will not let this behavior slide. The biggest, most profitable corporations in the industry must follow the rules. And the rules are simple: provide regular schedules and offer open shifts to current workers. These are not unreasonable demands.

The two bills before us today address this problem in two ways: through enhanced penalties and through worker training.

Enhanced Enforcement

Int. 613 gives DCWP the ability to seek the suspension, revocation, or denial of a fast food employer's food service establishment permit in three specific circumstances: 1) if the employer fails to pay any outstanding fines or penalties for violations; 2) if a court finds that the employer has engaged in a pattern or practice of violations; or 3) if the employer has been ordered to pay more than \$500,000 in penalties and fines in the last three years.

This gives the city the ability to take enhanced enforcement action against the worst offending employers – the ones that have engaged in systematic violations of the law. We believe that this will have a deterrent effect and will help to ensure compliance with Fair Workweek and Just Cause.

Incorporating a mechanism to suspend or revoke licenses for labor violations is a common-sense policy with long-standing precedent. Already, restaurants in New York City risk being shut down for health code violations, and they generally move quickly to correct the violations to minimize the loss of business and customers.⁴ The public has generally accepted the city's power in this regard as necessary towards protecting the well-being of its residents. The city should be able to employ a similar tool where the welfare of a fast food establishment's workers is compromised. We can expect that the combined risk of stiffer fines for repeat violations and license loss will make employers adjust their cost-benefit analysis when deciding whether to change their business practices to comply with scheduling requirements.

Laws conditioning business licenses on compliance with labor standards has precedent in other jurisdictions. Seattle, Washington; Chicago, Illinois; Somerville, Massachusetts; New Brunswick, NJ; Princeton, NJ; and Westchester County, NY have all passed local licensing laws that provide local governments with an additional powerful tool to prevent unscrupulous businesses with a history of wage theft and who pose a risk to workers and consumers from doing business in that jurisdiction.⁵

Workers' Rights Training

Int. 640 gives DCWP the ability to conduct trainings on city employment laws, including Fair Workweek and Just Cause, and would require the employer to pay employees for the time spent

⁴ Haeyoung Yoon, "Local and State Business Registration Schemes: An Enforcement Lever to Strengthen Employer Compliance with Labor Standards and to Facilitate Worker Organizing (Roosevelt Institute, Oct. 7, 2015), available at https://rooseveltinstitute.org/publications/local-and-state-business-registration-schemes-strengthen-employer-compliance-labor-standards-worker-organizing/.

⁵ Laura Huizar, "How Changes to Home Improvement Licensing Laws in Westchester County Could Help Protect Workers," (NELP Aug. 2018) available at https://s27147.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/Home-Improvement-Licensing-Could-Help-Westchester-Workers.pdf.

in these trainings. Int. 640 would allow DCWP to work with a workers' rights organization to provide trainings.

While DCWP has undertaken a robust public education and outreach effort and partnered with many workers' rights organizations to educate workers about their rights, many low-wage workers lack accurate information on their rights and how to enforce them. Employers have little incentive to make information on legal protections available to their workforce, and high turnover rates and highly dispersed workforces prevent workers from sharing information. Even when they do know what their rights are and have identified a violation, workers may be reluctant to report it because they fear retaliation. Trainings and workshops conducted by well-trained agency staff or community partners can go a long way towards getting key information to workers and giving them some assurance that they can safely report violations.

New York already partners closely with community organizations to play this role. The city contracts with several worker centers and legal service providers to conduct outreach and education to and represent low wage and immigrant workers in wage theft and other cases.⁶ These efforts reach thousands of workers per year and have returned millions of dollars in unpaid wages to working families. The state Department of Labor has also engaged in promising partnerships: it contracted with community organizations around the state to conduct outreach and education to and help workers apply for the state's Excluded Worker Fund. Both efforts have taken advantage of the CBOs' close-ties, deep trust, and cultural competency with vulnerable communities. Continuing to engage in similar partnerships to train fast food workers about FWW and other protections would be a key strategy for preventing and combatting violations.

We thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Int. 613 and 640.

⁶ Thomas Power, Sarah Leberstein & Katisha Andrew, "How New York City Must Support Low-Wage Essential Workers as They Support Everyone Else" (Gotham Gazette, Aug. 29, 2021) available at <u>https://www.gothamgazette.com/authors/130-opinion/10734-how-new-york-city-must-support-low-wage-essential-workers</u>.

At Riis Houses in the East village, NYC, where my family and I have lived for 10 years. I have witnessed slipshod work, work orders closed out, after putting In countless tickets ... my apartment has not been inspected in years . The first 5 years here, it seemed better managed, until management changed over in about 2016...our management office had a lack of business skills, etiquette, and general knowledge of what they are doing on a regular basis . The management office takes zero accountability in their lack of communication and are not organized ... it's very frustrating and I never had to deal with such incompetence in my life .. they hire so many people to make changes here, such as putting in new trees ... it does not take 4 workers to install a tree into the earth.. I see how the money from Hurricane sandy has been wasted. If you do the job right the first time, you would have less problems, and more cash flow into the community needs for housing maintenance... this building is old, obviously not up to code since the laws changed about asbestos ... and lead and mold and general u healthy breathing air with all of the construction that has been going on, and even more so in the recent last few months ... After Hurricane sandy, there were these Herc temporary light machines left outside, unmonitored for 6 years running illegally at 1700 Rpm .. that's equivalent to 3 cars running day and night into the atmosphere . I witnessed children playing as these machines ran rampant... dispersing black debris to the pavement as well as my curtains, air conditioners and window cils ... we had called the president of Herc rentals in 2019 after failed attempts of calling maintenance and managementto remove them ... we have video and images of this happening.... Shortly after speaking with the president of Herc Rentals, the light machines were removed ... No sooner than a few months later, my son at 20, was very sick ... and no one knows why ... he was sick for the last two or so years and had IPF idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis . And it was stated in his medical records that it is from an environmental antigen ... we have been exposed to mold here lead asbestos, 9/11 debris etc ... my son , at 23, passed away on 9/8/22 ... due to this terrible disease ... and for sure, the environment here has caused this to happen ... there is no reason why an athletic skateboarder about to be sponsored by Nike !!! Should get so sick Pulmonary fibrosis happens mostly in the elderly ... my son needed a double lung transplant ... there is no reason why he should have spiraled down so fast over the last two months .. other than there being ongoing issues with this place ...he didn't make it ..my son bathed in ten water here on August 3rd, by the next day August 4th, my birthday , he was in the hospital, until august 12th, he came home early ... he was supposed to go home on the 17th .. but he was doing well enough to go home ... once he was here he became sicker over the next 12 days or so... he wound up back in the hospital on 8/25..... he had respiratory failure ... he was intubated, then a tracheostomy... it just got worse and worse .. then he passed on 9/8/22.... I requested an autopsy and toxicology report and I'm waiting on results ... I think it's a lie about the arsenic scare ... it's too much of a coincidence with the time line of events recently and my son wound up in the hospital twice ... he bathed in the water and showered . And felt sick afterwards and we didn't know why ... once I attended the town hall meeting for Riis houses regarding the arsenic scare ... it all made sense to me ... a lot of people are sick and their kids have the same symptoms as my son did when he first became sick .. people

need to be moved out of here... to be able to live and NYCHA can properly renovate... and get up to code !!!! For the people !!!! Justice for Gavin!!!!

Respectfully,

Alica Griggs

Alyssa Roman, Chipotle Worker

Hello and good morning Chair Velázquez and Committee Members. My name is Alyssa Roman and I am a Chipotle worker and soon to be mother.

I started working at Chipotle as a means of asserting my independence as a young person. I work hard and want to do everything in my power to provide for my baby.

Recently, I've had to pick up another job in order to make enough money to save up for an apartment. I believe that fast food jobs can be the kind of job that I can raise a family on if the city has the will to enforce the laws that we've passed. But it is difficult when my manager repeatedly cuts my hours or assigns me tasks that endanger my pregnancy. I'm here today to ask the members of the committee to help protect fast food workers like me.

My story is not uncommon, as you've heard many of my coworkers testify this morning. Our employers need to know that we are worthy of dignity, respect, and safety on the job, and that if they break the law they will have to suffer the consequences.

I urge the committee to support Int 0613 and Int 0640 to help regulate an industry that treats their workforce as disposable. I ask that you support this legislation and stand with us as we ask the council to pass it into law.

Ashley Zavala, Chipotle Worker

Good morning Chair Velázquez and Committee Members. My name is Ashley Zavala and I work as a Service Manager at the Chipotle location at 404 Broadway.

As an expecting mother, I'm depending on my ability to work to provide for my family. Working in food service can get stressful, especially when the store is busy during a lunch or dinner rush. Combined with short staffing, it can be easy to make mistakes. Those mistakes can be dangerous, especially since we're preparing hot food. I've experienced several injuries while working at Chipotle.

I often feel overworked as a result of understaffing. When I talk to my coworkers, some of whom are here today, I feel confused because many of them want to work more hours. I too have expressed that I would like more hours in my schedule to prepare for my baby.

Staffing and schedule issues have larger impacts on fast food workers like me. And until our employers follow the law, we will need additional protections that can help regulate harmful practices. It's not fair that Chipotle can keep violating the law and still be allowed to do business in New York City.

I ask each of you to please support this legislation and help to pass it into law.

Autumn Segarra, Former Chipotle Worker

Good morning Chair Velázquez and Committee Members. My name is Autumn Segarra and I previously worked at the Chipotle located near John Jay.

I was terminated from Chipotle shortly after getting sick while on the job and being sent home by my manager. They said they were firing me because I didn't tell them about my symptoms, but I did. I filed a complaint with DCWP back in June, as I believe I was terminated without just cause. My case is still pending.

I stand here before you today, asking you to lend your solidarity to fast food workers who still fear unjust terminations, unpredictable or inadequate schedules, and retaliation for standing up for themselves. We need harsher punishments for employers who treat their employees this way. We need the protections outlined in Int 0613 and Int 0640. Please support us by passing these bills into law.

Lucia Pacheco, Chipotle Worker

Good morning Chair Velázquez and Committee Members. My name is Lucia Pacheco and I work at the Chipotle store located in Riverdale Crossing.

I am here today to ask you to support Int 0613 and Int 0640 that will further protect fast food workers like me from unstable schedules and ensure that every fast food worker knows their rights.

I work at Chipotle to support myself and my baby. Inconsistent schedules and reduction in hours makes it difficult for me to plan my life outside of work. It also makes it hard to save money or plan for my family's future.

I filed a complaint with DCWP because Chipotle cut my hours unlawfully.. I'm already struggling to keep up with the cost of living, I can't afford to lose the hours I depend on.

Chipotle needs to know this is not okay, and needs to follow the law in New York City. Committee members, I ask that you support this legislation and stand with us as we ask the council to pass it into law.

Maria Camila, Chipotle Worker

Good morning Chair Velázquez and Committee Members. My name is Maria Camila and I've worked at Chipotle for six years.

I am a single mother and am trying to save up to buy my own apartment. I don't make much money at Chipotle, but I'm happy to have the opportunity to work.

Over the years, I've had to get used to two things: 1) inconsistent scheduling and 2) high turnover of my coworkers. I know that the Fair Workweek Laws are meant to help bring stability to work schedules, and compensate workers for short notice changes to our schedules.

When we're asked to work clopenings or have our hours reduced or are terminated without just cause, it makes planning for our lives outside of work very difficult. We work hard every day at work to feed this city. It shouldn't be this way.

Fast food workers need the city's help. We need to show our employers that our rights are protected and need to be respected. Committee members, after hearing our stories, I want to know whether fast food workers can count on you to support Int 0613 and Int 0640.

Paloma Nunez, Chipotle Worker

Good morning Chair Velázquez and Committee Members. My name is Paloma Nunez and I work at the Chipotle located at 404 Broadway.

Pretty soon after I started working at Chipotle, I met an organizer from 32BJ. I was really happy we met because I learned a lot about my rights as a worker which I didn't know before. That's how I became aware my manager was unlawfully reducing my hours repeatedly. I filed a complaint challenging this in July.

I want to help organize my coworkers and teach them everything I learned, especially because our managers were breaking the very laws meant to protect us. I've seen many of my coworkers come and go because they couldn't maintain their lives while responding to unstable scheduling. I don't blame them.

It shouldn't be this way. While I was lucky enough to learn from an organizer, many fast food workers are still ignorant about their rights. Int 0640, expands the city's ability to conduct worker's rights training that would ensure that employees are empowered with the knowledge to identify when they are being taken advantage of.

It's important to me that this bill passes because I believe every worker should know their rights as granted to them by the law. That's why I'm asking the committee to please support this legislation. Thank you.

Teofila Guadalupe, Chipotle Worker

Buenos días Presidente Velázquez y Miembros del Comité. Mi nombre es Teofila Guadalupe y he trabajado en Chipotle por cinco años.

Mi tienda está ubicada en Bushwick en 774 Broadway. Me gusta trabajar allí porque está cerca de la escuela de mis hijos. Estoy orgulloso de poder trabajar y mantener a mi familia, pero las prácticas de programación de Chipotle para el equipo que trabaja alli han sido y continúan siendo un problema para mí.

Sé que el Consejo ha aprobado legislación anteriormente para ayudar a traer estabilidad a los horarios de los trabajadores de comida rápida. Por esto, estoy agradecida. Es bueno saber que los trabajadores de comida rápida tienen aliados en el Concejo municipal.

A pesar de que existen leyes para proteger a los trabajadores como yo, he tenido problemas con la programación de mis horas. Mi gerente no siempre me ha programado para las horas que se supone que debo cumplir de acuerdo con mi horario regular. Si no siguen el horario regular, ¿cuál es el sentido de la ley? Necesito estabilidad para planear mi vida y cuidar a mi familia. Presenté una queja ante DCWP en julio para obtener el dinero que me deben, pero preferiría que se siguieran las leyes en primer lugar.

Los trabajadores de comida rápida que dependen de sus ingresos para mantener a sus familias necesitan horarios estables. Nuestros empleadores necesitan saber que no pueden violar nuestros derechos o la ley. Les pido que por favor apoyen estos proyectos de ley.

Teofila Guadalupe, Chipotle Worker

Good morning Chair Velázquez and Committee Members. My name is Teofila Guadalupe and I've worked at Chipotle for about five years.

My store is located in Bushwick at 774 Broadway. I like working there because it is close to my children's school. I am proud to work and support my family, but Chipotle's scheduling practices have and continue to be a problem for me.

I know that the Council has previously passed legislation to help bring stability to fast food workers' schedules. For that, I am grateful. It's good to know that fast food workers have allies in the City Council.

Despite there being laws in place to protect workers like me, I have experienced issues with scheduling my hours. My manager has not always scheduled me for the hours that I am supposed to get according to my regular schedule. If they don't follow the regular schedule, then what's the point of the law? I need stability to plan my life and raise my family. I filed a complaint with DCWP in July to get the money I'm owed, but I would prefer if the laws were followed in the first place.

Fast food workers who depend on their income to support their families need stable schedules. Our employers need to know they cannot violate our rights or the law. I ask you to please support these bills.

Yeral Martinez, Chipotle Worker

Buenos días Presidente Velázquez y Miembros del Comité. Trabajo en Chipotle en 404 Broadway y he trabajado allí por muchos años.

Me alegró saber sobre el reciente acuerdo al que llegó la Ciudad con Chipotle, porque he visto numerosas reducciones de horas en mi horario, en violación de las leyes de Semana Laboral Justa y Causa Justa. En julio, presenté una queja ante DCWP cuestionando esto. Muchos de mis compañeros de trabajo a quienes escuchó hablar hoy compartieron experiencias similares.

Los trabajadores de comida rápida en todas partes están a merced de gerentes caprichosos. Sabemos esto porque a pesar de que el Concejo Municipal aprobó las protecciones de Fair Workweek y Just Cause, compañías como Chipotle continúan infringiendo la ley a nuestra costa.

Estoy aquí hoy para pedirles a los miembros de este comité que tomen una posición con los trabajadores de comida rápida y aumenten las sanciones por violar las protecciones de la Semana Laboral Justa. Los empleadores que violan la ley repetidamente no deben poder hacer negocios en la ciudad de Nueva York. Los insto a que apoyen el Int 0613 y lo conviertan en ley.

Yeral Martinez, Chipotle Worker

Good morning Chair Velázquez and Committee Members. I work at the Chipotle at 404 Broadway and have worked there for many years.

I was happy to hear about the recent settlement the City reached with Chipotle, because I have experienced numerous reductions in hours to my schedule, in violation of the Fair Workweek and Just Cause laws. In July, I filed a complaint with DCWP challenging this. Many of my coworkers who you've heard speak today shared similar experiences.

Fast food workers everywhere are at the mercy of capricious managers. We know this because despite the City Council passing Fair Workweek and Just Cause protections, companies like Chipotle continue to break the law at our expense.

I'm here today to ask the members of this committee to take a stand with fast food workers and increase the penalties for violating Fair Workweek protections. Employers who repeatedly break the law should not be allowed to do business in NYC. I urge you to support Int 0613 and pass it into law.

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