

CA Young Workers Partnership Spring Meeting - May 11, 2023  
By Richard Hirsh

The CA Young Workers Partnership meeting was on May 11, 2023 as a hybrid in-person/virtual meeting held at the School of Public Health at UC Berkeley. The meeting included project updates from the Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP), a discussion of Child Labor laws and California bills impacting young workers, a discussion of migrant child workers in the US, a New Employers working group report, discussion of the Safe Jobs for Youth Month campaign and updates from members of the partnership.

## **LOHP Project Updates**

### **California Dept. of Education / Teaching Occupational Safety and Health (TOSH) Project**

The California Dept. of Education funded LOHP on the Teaching Occupational Safety and Health (TOSH) Project. The goal of this project is to ensure that students engaged in work-based learning education programs in California's high schools (including Career Technical Education (CTE), Work Experience, WorkAbility, Linked Learning, and California Partnership Academies) receive high quality training in occupational safety and health (OSH) critical thinking skills, to prepare them to work safely, protecting themselves and others, and making them more employable. This project has helped achieve its goal by providing professional development on the NIOSH ready-to-use Youth @ Work—Talking Safety curriculum to 505 instructors and other staff in these programs. The unique contribution of this curriculum, and the focus of these professional development workshops, is to prepare students to make their own assessment of the hazards in a workplace and develop their own reaction plan, even when not directed by the employer—in other words, to give them the skills to be their own self-advocates.

### **YWLA Report Back**

The Young Worker Leadership Academy (YWLA) Nava College Team shared some of their experience while attending the Young Worker Leadership Academy. They said they learned about young worker rights on the job, and the importance of taking care of yourself. Students said, "the academy got me out of my comfort zone and I learned about self-advocacy." Their project is about young workers' rights. They will host a mini YWLA for their peers at school. They made google slides, used the kahoot application and prepared the pyramid safety game. They will facilitate these activities and participating students will earn prizes. The Nava College Team hosted their presentation on 5/12/2023. All four team members want to return as youth mentors and spread the message of youth advocacy.

AB 800 introduced by representative Liz Ortega would create a week of labor education for 11th and 12th graders in California. (proposed for April 28 - May 1).

A discussion ensued regarding the work of the group called the Foundation Government Accountability (FGA) based in Florida. The FGA is funded by billionaires who developed a

model piece of legislation that it has disseminated to certain receptive conservative legislators in various states which can be introduced to relax and roll back existing protections for child labor and allow further child labor exploitation. Erle Hall shared a Washington Post article regarding the FGA: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2023/04/23/child-labor-lobbying-fga/> The FGA was involved in creating the California AB 640 legislation which creates employer loopholes and undermines the work permit system. Young workers need to have a physical location, so there is some employer accountability, AB 640 by representative Alex Lee would allow anyone to hire high school students to get a work permit for online work. This bill is currently held in the labor and unemployment committee.

There is a Tik Tok on the Child Labor Crisis in the US:

<https://www.tiktok.com/@ajplus/video/7221666318989217066>. The Tik Tok details work permits, hours, hazards, locations and includes Marty Walsh, the former OSHA Director.

Erle Hall shared a quote from Grace Abbott, a child labor activist and social worker in the 1930s before child labor protections were in place. "Child labor and poverty are inevitably bound together and if you continue to use the labor of children as the treatment for the social disease of poverty, you will have both poverty and child labor to the end of time."

Richard Hirsh and Pam Murcell are developing a position paper to share with the AIHA Teen Safety Committee to hopefully allow AIHA to adopt a position on this topic and disseminate the paper to state legislatures where these bills are being introduced and enacted in some cases.

Angela Romano raised the issue of the cost-of-living crisis, especially for undocumented students, who have no choice but to work, as the work permit criteria do not work for everyone. Some of these students can't settle for part time jobs. She stressed the importance of becoming aware of the reality of young people's lives. There are so many businesses that hire students without work permits. Educating youth not just on safety but on how to understand their rights so their perception of avoiding the work permit process changes. Erle Hall added that basic cost of living programs are now being piloted in several cities and have developed excellent data. Advocating for basic income programs is another piece of the puzzle that would improve the current situation.

Erle Hall shared that apprenticeships are useful for creating a protected experience. The New York Times reported that child labor issues are on the rise and horrific incidents are happening, especially in warehouses. Algorithms and automation are making people work at superhuman speeds and are wearing out their bodies. Youth may think they know what is best, but we must educate everyone. Teens tend to work with a feeling of invincibility and it is our role to help them understand. Tangible realistic examples in the Talking Safety Youth@Work curriculum have been really helpful to combat that feeling of invincibility.

Alejandra Domenzain from LOHP offered that the root causes of child labor/exploitation need to be addressed including the cost of living and unmet basic needs and proposed a social safety net to ensure that youth are not put in this impossible position. It's our collective responsibility

through legislation, enforcement, education, etc. to care for our children and not leave them to fend for themselves amongst predatory employers/industries.

Rich Hirsh continued to raise the issue that the work permit system and other information on hiring young workers needs to be part of the process of gaining a new business license, so that this information is provided to employers in the application process.

### **Safe Jobs 4 Youth Month:**

Rich Hirsh announced that CIHC will help facilitate Safe Jobs 4 Youth Month (Resource Kit: <https://youngworkers.org/safe-jobs-month/resource-kit/>) with the introduction of another CA legislative resolution this month and perhaps a joint resolution next year with initial work in January for introduction in May 2024. CIHC is supporting several bills involving youth at work including AB 685, AB 735 and AB 800.

Rich recently held discussions with representatives from the San Francisco Unified School District's Career Technical Education and Summer Internship departments to introduce the AIHA Safety Matters curricula or the NIOSH Talking Safety Youth@Work curricula into the school programs. Aldo Munoz, a UC Berkeley Industrial Hygiene student has volunteered to deliver the trainings to students this summer. Rich also discussed the AIHA initiative IH in Schools to promote the career of industrial hygiene and also provide assistance to schools to address infrastructure hazards (e.g., IAQ, lead, mold, etc.) within the schools.

A presentation was made by attorney/advocate Jon Salazar called "Child Labor – Undocumented Youth Background and Context" regarding his work at RFK legal clinic (<https://rfkschools-laUSD-ca.schoolloop.com/legalclinic>) in Los Angeles and at the Ambassador School of Global Education at the New Open World Academy (<https://now-laUSD-ca.schoolloop.com/>). He has served as a newcomer counselor for immigrant children. He has also done work with the UCLA Immigrant Family Legal Clinic (<https://www.ilrc.org/asylum>) to provide direct representation on immigration and asylum as well as with the Sophia Institute for Human Security (SIHS) at <https://dept.sophia.ac.jp/is/sihs/eng/about/>. He also has worked with the Miguel Contreras Learning Complex, Academic Leadership Community School, School of Social Justice, School of Business and Tourism, and Los Angeles School of Global Studies. Jon conducted a group case study to generate ideas amongst partnership members on how to address the plight of one such student who is seeking asylum from Honduras.

### **Engaging Employers in Young Worker Health and Safety Working Group Update:**

LOHP investigated ways that we can get resources on young workers out to small businesses. Challenges include no formal process that small businesses have to go through when they first start a business – just tax/financial processes. Even though there are sexual harassment/non-discrimination trainings, it is hard to ensure those are happening. There is also difficulty finding consistent employer contacts to understand what procedures are in place to enforce safety

measures as procedures might vary by geography (Bay vs. LA). Interviews with employers revealed a trend: businesses claimed they won't employ minors under 18 but it is known that there are a lot of minors working and may exist below the radar. Efforts for outreach include a Handbook for Engaging Employers which provides more information about work permits ([Handbook for Engaging Employers](#)) designed by LOHP. Other potential tool includes converting the Working with Employers [Fact Sheet](#) into an app. Others suggested outreach to trade associations and school systems to target parents who have small businesses; coordinating efforts with the Small Business Administration (SBA); legislation efforts to protect young workers; an inter-agency hearing involving the Department of Labor, EEOC and others, as well as reaching out to Parent Teacher Associations (PTA).

Other websites which may be helpful include:

- [Secretary of State](#)
- [Employment Development Department \(Nick Devoli may be a good contact\)](#)
- [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#)
- [Cal Gold Permit Assistance Tool](#)
- [CA Employment Law Report](#)
- [CA Employer Advisory Council](#)
- [DIR Small Business Portal](#)
- [Cal Chamber](#)