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Advocates Call on the City of Denver to Combat the Scourge of Wage Theft
Millions in Stolen Wages Undermine Economic Equity, Civic Participation, Tax Revenue, Consumer Spending and the Health of Denver Residents

Denver, Colorado

In response to Mayor Hancock’s Launch of Consumer Financial Protection Division last week, advocates are presenting the City with a comprehensive plan for protecting workers from the scourge of wage theft. Wage theft is shorthand for a variety of ways that employers nickel and dime employees out of legally earned wages. Wage theft disproportionately victimizes low-wage and immigrant workers, but the scope of the problem is so big that it impacts us all. The Colorado Fiscal Institute estimates that \$750 million in earned wages is stolen from Colorado workers each year. That is huge. It leaves hard-working families on the brink of poverty, suffering the physical and mental health effects of financial insecurity. It also impacts larger economic factors in our City, ranging from tax revenue to consumer spending. With renewed focus on hard-working Denverites through the Consumer Financial Protection Division, the City is well-positioned to become a leader in the fight against wage theft.

“I am thrilled that the City is thinking strategically about how to protect vulnerable Denverites and expand economic equity,” said Towards Justice attorney David Seligman and lead author of the White Paper. “This White Paper provides a roadmap for Denver to become a leader in the fight against wage theft. With cranes rising in the sky, now is the time for Denver to ensure not only that all workers participate in our economic success, but also that law-abiding employers are rewarded rather than penalized for paying their workers in accordance with the law.”

“Wage theft victimizes one in ten Coloradans, but disproportionately affects low-wage workers and day laborers,” said Rebecca Galemba, a Korbel School Professor whose research focuses on wage theft in the Denver day-laborer community and a co-author of the White Paper. “My research shows that far too

many of those workers have no idea where to turn when their employers steal their wages. The proposals presented here would help change that.”

“The construction industry in Denver is out of control. I see so many workers taken advantage of every day,” said Juan Arellano of the Colorado Carpenters, which co-authored the White Paper. “We’re running the Criminal Colorado campaign precisely to draw attention to these abuses. But we need more government engagement to fight a problem of this scale.”

“As a small-business owner who plays by the rules and pays legal wages, very little makes me more mad than businesses that skirt the law by stealing wages. It's hard to compete with that. Also, their cheated workers are my customers, whose wages help support my business and countless others around this City. Denver should stand up for workers and law-abiding businesses by enforcing wage theft protections,” said Charlier Berger, Owner and Founder of Cerveceria Colorado, a small craft brewery that cares about workers' rights and community.

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Towards Justice empowers America's chronically marginalized workforce to address systemic injustice, defend family financial stability, and ensure that work is the most effective strategy for economic success in our country. Learn more at www.towardsjustice.org.

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Colorado Carpenters are affiliated with THE SOUTHWEST REGIONAL COUNCIL OF CARPENTERS (SWRCC). The SWRCC represents 50,000 members working in the carpentry crafts in CO, CA, NM, NV, AZ, UT. Learn more at www.swcarpenters.org.

To learn more about the Criminal Colorado campaign, please visit CriminalColorado.com. Additional information can be found on Facebook and You Tube at [@CriminalColorado](#) and Twitter at [@CriminalCO17](#).

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