

Tackling wage theft in Santa Clara County

Maria Noel Fernandez <no-reply@wpusa.org>

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To: Maria Hernandez

WORKING PARTNERSHIPS USA

Dear Maria,

Three years ago, Magali was working 13-hour days, every day of the week at Los Pinitos restaurant. Over the course of eight months, her repeated requests for payment yielded just two checks of \$200 each. When she and a coworker sought the help of an attorney, the courts found that Los Pinitos owes Magali over \$22,000 in back wages - of which she has yet to see a penny.

Wage theft is rampant in the restaurant industry and other industries - including home care, personal care and construction - where low-wage immigrant workers work long hours to make a living. **But an exciting new development in Santa Clara County will make it easier for workers like Magali to seek justice, and to prevent more situations like hers from ever arising.**

Last Tuesday, December 4, the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to approve funding to pilot the County's inaugural Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement (OLSE). The vote is a result of more than a year's worth of engagement and planning with community allies, legal experts, staff and the Board of Supervisors to begin to design a new way to ensure our most vulnerable workers can learn about their rights and access justice. The board voted to expand the mission of the office to address violations of sexual abuse, retaliation, and labor violation on construction contracts and to pursue an additional investment in the next fiscal year.

The Office's mission centers on the fact that passing pro-worker policies is just the start of creating an economy that works for everyone: policies must be monitored and enforced to ensure that workers receive the protection they deserve.