

DWD: Task force on worker misclassification and payroll fraud invites public input

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MADISON –Governor Tony Evers’s Joint Enforcement Task Force on Payroll Fraud and Worker Misclassification invites the public to share how worker classification issues have impacted their job, business, or workplace at its January 21 meeting.

“Governor Evers is interested in receiving public input ahead of releasing his 2021 biennial budget,” said Danielle Williams, Task Force Chair and Department of Workforce Development Assistant Deputy Secretary. “The Task Force would like to share with the Governor and, ultimately, the State Legislature more about how the practice of misclassification is directly affecting individuals in our communities ahead of their budget deliberations.”

Misclassification denies workers legal protections, such as the right to earn a minimum wage and freedom from discrimination, as well as benefit programs, like unemployment insurance and worker’s compensation. The practice also results in millions of dollars in losses to state government and taxpayers due to underreported wages. Employers who misclassify workers gain an unlawful competitive advantage that allows them to under-bid and out-compete law-abiding employers.

The Task Force, created by Governor Evers in 2019, issued [several recommendations in its last report](#) that aimed to protect workers and educate employers about the harms of misclassifying workers as “independent contractors” when, under law, they should be classified as employees. However, Williams explains that the significance of the programs and protections afforded under the employer-employee relationship became even more clear in the wake of the global

pandemic.

“All workers in this state have been impacted by this virus and many have had to utilize the programs and protections offered through the employer-employee relationship, many for the first time,” Williams said. “For example, some essential workers exposed to the virus at work had to access worker’s compensation benefits to cover their treatment. Hundreds of thousands have had to claim unemployment benefits when they were laid off as part of the statewide effort to keep everyone safer at home. And still others had to claim family medical leave protections in order to stay home to care for family members. While the federal government provided some short-term protections for those who might otherwise not be covered, such as unemployment benefits to gig workers, it is imperative that the state makes sure workers are properly classified going forward.”

A Joint Enforcement Task Force meeting agenda follows. Those who would like to attend may register by clicking the link below. The public may also submit written comments to: [MisclassificationTaskforce@dwd.wisconsin.gov](mailto: MisclassificationTaskforce@dwd.wisconsin.gov).

For more information about the Task Force, please visit: <https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/misclassification/meetings.htm>