

# U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Joins senators in effort to hold companies accountable for contracting with Packers Sanitation Services, Inc.

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*WASHINGTON, D.C.* – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin, alongside several Senate colleagues, sent letters to nine companies that contracted with the Wisconsin-based Packers Sanitation Services, Inc. (PSSI), which the Department of Labor (DOL) found were unlawfully employing migrant child labor at these host companies' facilities. In the letters, the senators ask each host company to detail the changes to their contractor monitoring and procurement processes they plan to implement or have made since the discovery of PSSI's use of child labor to ensure this never happens again.

“We write in response to recent reports that your company employed a contractor, Packers Sanitation Services Inc. (PSSI), that violated the Fair Labor Standards Act's (FLSA) prohibition on the use of child labor in hazardous environments and exploited migrant children,” **wrote the senators to the nine companies.** “We are concerned that your company potentially turned a blind eye to glaring child labor issues in your facilities, and are deeply troubled by the response to previous Congressional inquiries that seek to shift accountability away from host companies to third-party contractors. While we recognize that you may have severed ties with PSSI, we are seeking information on your company's process for monitoring contractor compliance with labor laws as well as information on the changes you will be implementing to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future.”

Since 2018, the DOL has seen a 69 percent increase in companies illegally employing children. In fiscal year 2023, the DOL found 835 companies it

investigated had employed more than 3,800 children in violation of labor laws. In this particular case, the DOL's Wage and Hour Division began investigating PSSI in August 2022 and found PSSI liable for employing more than 100 children, aged thirteen to seventeen at 13 meat-processing facilities in eight states. As DOL noted when unveiling an interagency child labor task force in February, companies who contract for services are often not vigilant about who is working in their facilities, creating child labor violations up and down the supply chain, and host companies often falsely claim that they are unaware or unable to control child labor issues happening at their worksites.

"We are concerned that [your company] did not conduct sufficiently rigorous monitoring and oversight of third-party contractors like PSSI. This lack of vigilance... allows for egregious violations and raises broader concerns of compliance and accountability," **added the senators**. "Further, we are concerned that, despite the investigation and settlement by the DOL, Congressional inquiries, and outreach from the United States Department of Agriculture, several host companies have failed to terminate contracts with PSSI, have failed to address the deficiencies in their existing compliance and auditing practices, and/or have failed to institute company-wide oversight practices to address the current crisis."

"Without concerted efforts by all relevant parties to root out all instances of child labor across the industry, children will continue to be illegally employed and exploited in dangerous working conditions in our country," **concluded the senators**. "As such, we write to ask your company a number of questions to ensure that you properly monitor your contractors for potential FLSA and Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) violations, including child labor, and get to the bottom of past monitoring failures."

The senators sent letters to nine companies that contracted with PSSI, including Tyson Foods, George's Inc. (part of Rosen's Diversified, Inc.), JBS Foods, Maple Leaf Farms Inc., Cargill Inc., Turkey Valley Farms, Buckhead Meat of Minnesota (part of Sysco Corporation), Gibbon Packing Co., and Greater Omaha Packing Co. Inc.

Joining Senator Baldwin in this oversight effort are Senators Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Peter Welch (D-VT), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), John Fetterman (D-PA), and Ron Wyden (D-OR).