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Chicago Domestic Workers Contract Mandate Protects Care Workers

Written contracts must be provided by employers of domestic workers beginning January 1, 2022

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot and the Chicago Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) today announced a historic step forward for Chicago’s domestic workers. Effective January 1, 2022, all Chicago employers of nannies, care workers, and home cleaners must provide their workers with a written contract in their preferred language. The contract must include the wage and the work schedule agreed upon by the employer and the domestic worker. This mandate ensures accountability, transparency, and predictability for domestic workers so they can plan for themselves and their families.

"I grew up watching my mother work hard, day in and day out, as a home healthcare aide, so that others could live their lives," said Mayor Lightfoot. "That's why I know domestic workers are the backbone of this city and deserve to be protected. With this mandate, we will continue to deliver these protections by making Chicago the largest city in the country that requires a written contract for domestic and household employees."

"Domestic workers must be treated with dignity and respect within their workplace," said BACP Commissioner Kenneth J. Meyer. "Requiring written contracts recognizes the invaluable contributions care workers make to Chicago families."

Employers of domestic care works are responsible for creating a safe, fair, and equitable workplace. The new mandate means all Chicago employers of domestic workers must provide their workers with a written contract in their primary language, as requested by the worker, regardless of their status as an employee or independent contractor. A domestic worker includes any person whose primary duties include housekeeping, nanny services, caregiving, personal care, or home health services.

An environment of collaboration and dialogue should be created to ensure that the terms of the work agreement are mutually agreeable. The contract should be reviewed and signed in person by the worker, the employer, and a witness. The contract can be printed or be provided in a printable communication in physical or electronic format, such as an e-mail. Contracts should be reviewed annually and when there is a change to the job description or scope of work (e.g., the birth of another child, additional household chores/tasks). Clear, transparent expectations generate higher quality work. Sample contracts are available by visiting Chi.gov/Care.

"Domestic workers are a vital part of our society and economy," said Andrew Fox, Director of the BACP Office of Labor Standards. "We will continue to fight to uphold and protect their rights."

"Contracts are an important step contributing to changes and improvements for domestic workers and raising awareness of employers," said Beatriz Tlalolini, a nanny and member of Arise Chicago.

“A contract lists out responsibilities and obligations in writing for both the employer and the worker and provides the option to renegotiate and modify the agreement according to any changes or needs for either the employer or employee.”

In 2021, BACP and The Chicago Foundation for Women made a \$100,000 investment to Arise Chicago to support outreach and education efforts to domestic workers, ensuring information about these labor protections is widely disseminated.

There are over 56,000 care workers in the Chicagoland area who are predominantly women of color and immigrants. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of home health and personal care aides is projected to grow 33 percent from 2020 to 2030, much faster than the average for all occupations.

This mandate is a pillar of Mayor Lightfoot’s anti-poverty agenda and serves as a call to action to employers of care workers to commit to four actions: 1) pay a fair, living wage; 2) provide paid time off; 3) have written expectations that are clear and mutually agreed upon; and 4) maintain safe workplaces. To bring awareness and action, the *Your Home is Someone’s Workplace* campaign was launched to elevate care workers (e.g., house cleaners, nannies, and home healthcare aides) as working professionals deserving of better working conditions, dignity, and respect. Through the *Your Home is Someone’s Workplace* campaign, employers and care workers can find information, resources, and guidelines on creating safe workplaces at chi.gov/care.

All Chicago worker protections are enforced by the BACP Office of Labor Standards (OLS). The OLS is dedicated to promoting and enforcing Chicago’s labor laws, including Minimum Wage, Paid Sick Leave, Fair Workweek, and Wage Theft Ordinance. Since its launch in early 2020, OLS has recouped over \$1,000,000 for workers and fined over 100 businesses, with fines totaling nearly \$200,000. Any employer who does not provide the written contract can be subjected to a fine.

If domestic workers are being refused a contract, they can send an email to BACPlaborstandards@cityofchicago.org or call 312-744-2211. OLS can help guide employees through the complaint process and work to remedy any violations they have experienced.

The development of a written contract for domestic workers was based on a recommendation from the Mayor’s Protecting Workers Working Group (PWWG). The PWWG brings agencies at all levels of government together with community-based organizations to advise the City on how to address industries, such as domestic work, that are ripe for exploitation and human trafficking. The PWWG is co-chaired by the Mayor’s Office and OLS and aligns with the Mayor’s anti-poverty agenda. In 2021, the PWWG, the Mayor’s Office and OLS collaborated to shape worker protections within the [Chi Biz Strong ordinances](#), which included first-ever wage theft protections for all workers and raised the minimum wage of all domestic workers to \$15/hour as of August 1, 2021.

Care workers and employers can visit [Chi.gov/Care](https://chi.gov/Care) for more information on worker protection and rights.

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