



June 22, 2026

The Honorable Mike DeWine Governor
State of Ohio Riffe Center
77 South High St 30th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Governor DeWine:

I am writing once again in my capacity as Chair of the National Consumers League's Child Labor Coalition to thank you for your previous leadership and courage in vetoing legislation that would have weakened Ohio's child labor protections. Your actions demonstrated a commitment to safeguarding the health, education, and well-being of Ohio's young people over business interests.

As you likely know, there's another attempt to extend the hours that teens may work during the school year by allowing 14- and 15-year-olds to remain on the job until 9:00 p.m. on Friday and Saturday evenings. Thirty-seven of the organizations comprise the Child Labor Coalition—including Human Rights Watch, the National Education Association, and many other organizations dedicated to protecting children—strongly oppose House Bill 455.

This legislation is deeply troubling because it conflicts with the spirit and protections of the Fair Labor Standards Act, which limits the hours of 14- and 15-year-olds during the school year. Federal law recognizes a simple truth: children need adequate time for education, homework, rest, extracurricular activities, and family life. These protections exist because generations of Americans learned, often through painful experience, that when child labor standards are weakened, children bear the consequences.

At a time when child labor violations are rising across the nation, Ohio should be strengthening protections for young workers—not weakening them. Extending work hours later into the evening sends exactly the wrong message. No labor shortage, staffing challenge, or business convenience justifies asking children to sacrifice sleep, academic performance, safety, or their overall well-being.

The question before you is not merely about an additional two hours of work. It is about whether Ohio will continue to uphold the hard-won protections in the Fair Labor Standards Act which established the principle that children deserve special protections because they are children. It is about whether the state will stand with families, educators, and child advocates, or whether it will take another step toward dismantling the safeguards that have protected young workers for decades.

The FLSA already restricts working hours for youth under 16 to 7 pm and changing Ohio law would create confusion for businesses, youth, and parents on what is allowable under the law, which states:

Child Labor Regulation No. 3, [29 C.F.R. § 570.35](#), limits the hours and the times of day that 14- and 15-year-olds may work to:

- outside school hours;
- no more than 3 hours on a school day, including Fridays;
- no more than 8 hours on a non-school day;
- no more than 18 hours during a week when school is in session;
- no more than 40 hours during a week when school is not in session;
- between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.—except between June 1 and Labor Day when the evening hours are extended to 9 p.m.

At present, Ohio, like many states, follows federal child labor law and allows children to work up to three hours, until 7:00 pm, when school is in session. Extending these hours until 9 p.m. will impact the ability of students to participate in after-school activities, family occasions, do their homework, and have sufficient sleep to perform to their best abilities in school. Academic research shows that students who work more than 20 hours per week see their grades drop and their school completion rates drop.

Ohio's children are already at risk of violations of existing child labor laws by employers in Ohio. In 2023, the U.S., the Department of Labor reported these alarming violations:

- April 5, 2023, Walnut Creek Lumber, Dundee, OH: A 15-year-old worker was illegally employed in a hazardous occupation – the operation of a sawmill – in which he suffered grave injury when he became entangled in the gears of a powered wood processing machine. In addition, investigators found four minors under 16 were employed before 7 a.m., for more than 8 hours on non-school days, and more than 40 hours during a non-school week.
- February 22, 2023, Mio's Pizza franchises, Cincinnati and Milford, OH: 21 minors under 16 were illegally allowed to use manual fryers, operate gas ovens with an open flame, move pizza in and out of a broiler/conveyor oven, and use a mechanical dough puller and sheeter.
- February 15, 2023, Slim Chickens franchise, Avon, OH: Investigators found that minors under 16 worked more than 3 hours on a school day, in more than 150 instances.

The later into the evening youth work, the greater the risks. Young workers employed in public-facing jobs—restaurants, retail stores, convenience stores, hotels, and other service-sector positions—are also vulnerable to robbery, assault, sexual harassment, and other forms of workplace violence during late-night hours. Extending child work hours does not simply add time to a shift; it exposes young people to heightened dangers at a time

when staffing is often thin, supervision may be reduced, and criminal activity is more common.

We must also recognize that some employers have repeatedly demonstrated a willingness to place profits ahead of children's welfare. Across the country, there's a disturbing rise in child labor violations, with excessive hours and greater number of children assigned to hazardous work. Students are pressured to put work ahead of school and family responsibilities. Weakening Ohio's child labor protections sends a dangerous signal to those employers who view children not as students and developing young people, but as a source of cheap, pliable labor.

If children are traveling home from work later, they are also at greater risk of being injured or harmed on the journey home, due to fatigue and the increased prevalence of drivers operating vehicles under the influence.

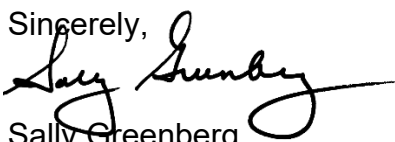
We understand that HB455 aims to lengthen the workday for 14- and 15-year-olds who may not be able to drive, but some of these workers will be at increased risk because they will be ferried to or from work at later hours, often by fellow teen aged workers or teen siblings. Maintaining the current Ohio law setting 7:00 pm as the maximum work time for teen workers will save lives. The primary cause of teenage deaths is injuries sustained from vehicle accidents, accounting for almost half of all adolescent deaths.

Weakening hours protections, so that they do not align with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), will also create confusion within the business community as we have seen in states like Iowa, where hours protections were weakened and employers became confused and did not realize that they were still legally obligated to adhere to stricter, more protective federal laws.

Extending allowable working hours for teens will add to the enforcement burden of understaffed federal and state labor inspectors. Given the rampant violations of the current child labor laws, and the lack of demand from voters for later working hours for their children, there is no justifiable reason for the State of Ohio to roll back long-standing child labor laws. Extending the hours children work is not a solution to the shrinking immigrant workforce.

Governor, you've shown tremendous courage and character in the past. We ask you to do as you've done previously - draw a firm line and veto HB455. Ohio's children should not be asked to sacrifice their sleep, education, health, or safety to satisfy labor shortages and corporate demands. Generations fought to establish child labor protections because the consequences of exploitation were too devastating to ignore. Do not turn back the clock. Stand on the right side of history, protect Ohio's children, and preserve the safeguards that keep them safe. Their future is in your hands.

Sincerely,



Sally Greenberg

CEO, National Consumers League & Co-Chair of the Child Labor Coalition

Child Labor Coalition Members

- Action Against Child Exploitation (ACE)
- Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP)
- Bank Information Center
- Beyond Borders
- Centre for Child Rights and Business
- Coffee Watch
- Corporate Accountability Lab
- Fair Labor Association
- Fairtrade America
- Farmworker Justice
- First Focus Campaign for Children
- Free the Slaves
- Global Campaign for Education-US
- Global Fairness Initiative
- Global Labor Justice
- GoodWeave International
- Green America
- Grow Early Learning (formerly ECMHSP)
- Human Rights Watch
- International Initiative to End Child Labor
- International Rights Advocates
- Lawyers for Good Government
- Media Voices for Children
- Migrant Legal Action Program
- Mighty Earth
- National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
- National Ag Families Head Start Association
- National Association of State Directors of Migrant Education
- National Consumers League
- National Education Association
- PACT (formerly ECPAT-USA)
- Pact
- PRIME International Social Enterprise
- United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society
- Verité
- Winrock International
- World Vision USA