

WORKSAFE 2024

Worksafe: Impact Report 2024

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Introduction

Hello Friends and Allies!

This has been an exciting year! We've seen some of the seeds we've been planting for years begin to come to fruition (the Black Worker Initiative, the Indoor Heat Standard, growing protections for Domestic Workers), worked on new projects with exciting and promising results (the Youth Listening Summit, collaborations with Prison Justice orgs) and coalesced into a team that feels incredibly aligned and joyful.

Often by this time of year, things have quieted some, and much of the work turns introspective and reflective, but we're already deep in preparations for projects and ideas for 2025, some of which we'll be able to share with you in the early months of the new year!

One thing that hasn't changed is that both the threats and opportunities facing workers continue to grow, and the communities and organizations tasked with facing down the threats and seizing the opportunities continue to become more interwoven, intentional, strategic and motivated.

We invite you to join us in taking a breath to celebrate the things we've accomplished, and to reflect with us on how to keep rising to the fresh challenges of the day to day.

In Solidarity ,

Amira, AnaStacia, Benita, Cerina, Jora, Karín, Leonard, Oraiu, Rachel, and Stephen



The team poses with team-building art at the October Worksafe retreat

Our Strategic Plan & Mission

Mission: Preventing injury, illness, and death by bringing justice to the workplace

Vision: A world where workers and their communities are safe and healthy

Values:

- We believe that all workers deserve a safe and healthy workplace
- We know that there is dignity in all work and all workers deserve respect
- We demand that workers have equal access to justice in the workplace
- We center the experiences of vulnerable workers, including low-wage and immigrant workers
- We seek worker-centered and community-based solutions for protecting health and safety
- We promote a collaborative, movement-building approach to action and advocacy

OUR APPROACH
Worksafe Strategic Plan 2022-2027



PRIORITY 1
EMPOWER UNDER-RESOURCED AND MARGINALIZED WORKERS
Goal 1: Build worker, community, and advocate strength and power.



PRIORITY 2
ADVANCE WORKER HEALTH AND SAFETY THROUGH LAW & POLICY
Goal 2: Promote and advocate for OSH laws, regulations, and standards that uphold the safety and dignity of disenfranchised and marginalized workers in California.
Goal 3: Engage in agency and government oversight and collaboration to advance better enforcement, staffing, and protective policy.



PRIORITY 3
STRENGTHEN WORKSAFE
Goal 4: Prioritize organizational health and job-quality in the culture of Worksafe.
Goal 5: Maintain financial stability and increase revenue.

Climate-Linked Worker Advocacy

California Enacts Nation-Leading Heat Protections for All Workers

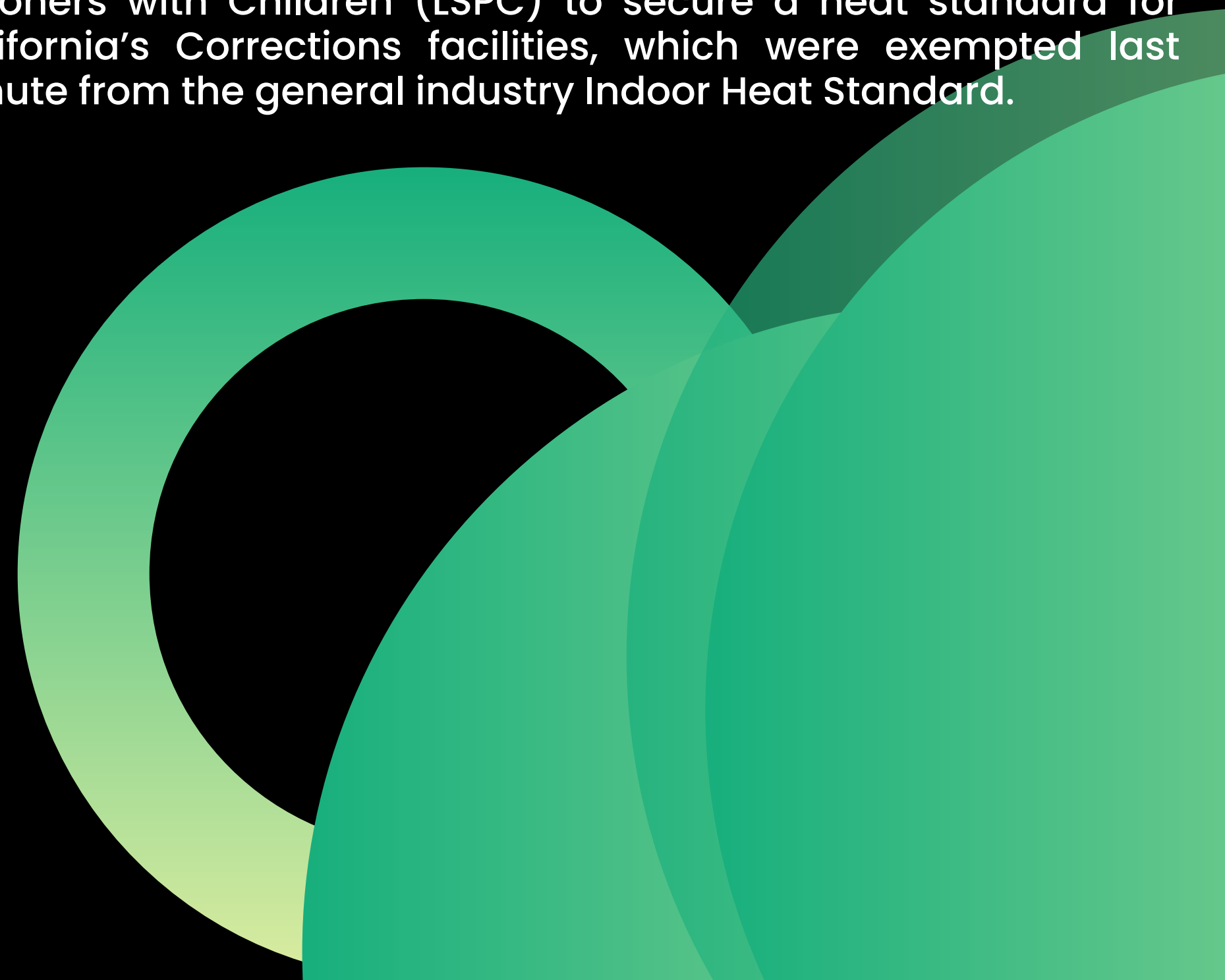
California has now enacted groundbreaking protections for indoor workers from excessive heat on the job. At its June meeting, the Standards Board voted unanimously to approve the new rule and it went into effect almost immediately, on July 23.

California employers with workplaces that reach 82 degrees must now have a Heat Illness Prevention Plan that "must be specific and customized to the employer's operations" and workers are to be trained on the plan. Cool down areas and cold drinking water must be provided and easy to access during working hours. When temperatures reach 87 degrees, employers must take additional steps to protect workers from the dangers of high heat, including implementing a hierarchy of control measures to avoid or reduce the heat and administrative controls to minimize the risk of their workers suffering heat illness.

We celebrate this new standard while also expressing our disappointment at the last minute exclusion for Corrections facilities. It is one of our top priorities to secure progress on a Corrections standard in 2025.

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To this end, in addition to working with Climate Resolve and the Adrienne Arsht-Rockefeller Foundation Resilience Center to advance heat protections for workers, we have also joined forces with criminal justice reform advocates Legal Services for Prisoners with Children (LSPC) to secure a heat standard for California's Corrections facilities, which were exempted last minute from the general industry Indoor Heat Standard.



Black Worker Outreach

We continued to build out the Black Worker Initiative (BWI) in 2024 with the addition of a new team member, Leonard Brown, and by connecting to community through events like the Black Joy Parade on February 25th, where the outreach team tabled alongside Black Cultural Zone.



The CCWP Worker Assembly





Joyful Gatherings

California Worker Outreach Convening

Our work with the California Worker Outreach Project (CWOP) as regional lead for the Bay Area continued in 2024, with our Co-Lead partner Step Forward, led by Board Member Ruth Silver-Taube. We kicked off the year with a convening which gathered sixteen organizations, and rounded out the year with another in October. These in-person retreats are valuable opportunities for training, community-building and skill-share, and we will likely continue them into the following year.



The effectiveness of CWOP is well documented in helping workers know and access their rights.

We look forward to continuing this good work in the coming years.

The Youth Listening Summit

This incredible event was a first for Worksafe, bringing Oakland youth together with local organizations to learn, share, and even prepare presentations for local elected representatives and state officials.

Over 100 young people attended our hours-long event on April 28th, which featured everything from waffles and vendors to appearances by the California Labor Commissioner and the head of Cal/OSHA.



Jora pauses for a photo with YLS attendees including City Councilmembers Carroll Fife and Nikki Fortunato Bas

Our Legal Work This Year

49 Direct technical assistance to organizations, qualified legal service providers (QLSPs) and individuals

This year, Worksafe assisted workers represented by a Bay Area QLSP in an OSH complaint against a popular retailer. The employer was cited and the employer provided proof of purchase that they bought the necessary PPE they failed to have that was leading to unsafe work conditions. Worksafe continues to assist on retaliation issues that a worker has faced with this employer.

This year, Worksafe closed out a case from 2020 where Worksafe was providing a QLSP and workers assistance on an OSH complaint and the subsequent appeals process. In March 2020, before the shelter-in-place order, Cal/OSHA cited this janitorial employer \$40,000 in response to a complaint Worksafe filed on behalf of the workers. The janitorial employer appealed the citation, and Worksafe preserved the interests of the workers by participating in the appeals process through third party status. The case finally settled for \$23,500. Most serious citations remain on this Employer's records through Worksafe's negotiations. This creates a record for the Employer, which would allow Cal/OSHA to do a more in-depth investigation if workers were experiencing unsafe conditions with this same employer, and result in higher and willful citations if the same unsafe conditions exist.

Detained Workers Exposed to COVID-19 and Other Hazards

Worksafe and Collaborative for Immigrant Justice (CCIJ) continue to fight for protections for detained workers. As we reported last year, Cal/OSHA has found willful and serious violations by the private detention company GEO Group, and issued fines of almost \$105,000. The workers performed essential cleaning and other duties in 8-hour shifts in unsafe conditions, for which they were paid only \$1 per day, an additional injustice that led dozens of them to launch a strike and sue the company. There were multiple COVID-19 outbreaks at the facility, both before and after the penalty was issued. The worker-detainees also suffered retaliation as a result – CCIJ is representing a worker on a health and safety retaliation claim.

We continue to litigate the case in administrative proceedings, as reported here by Bloomberg. The OSH Appeals Board (OSHAB) requested supplemental briefing on **Worksafe's** position that our clients are employees who are civilly detained and are not prisoners as defined by the state Labor Code. **Worksafe** continues to fight for the detainee workers' rights to participate as third parties in the appeals process, which allows them to have a voice in the proceedings, even if those rights are not the same as being a full party to a proceeding. Worksafe has been strongly advocating for the complainants' right to participate anonymously in third party proceedings.

Worksafe is proud to have partnered with the ACLU, which submitted an amicus brief in support of our position that detained workers are not prisoners as defined by the state.

Detained Workers Exposed to COVID-19 and Other Hazards Continued

Labor Code and sharing experiences of how detained individuals face heightened risks of retaliation, which is why anonymous participation is necessary.

In June, Radio Bilingue requested that senior staff attorney, Karín Umfrey, and a previously detained individual participate in their live talk show, *Línea Abierta*, for a 20 minute segment, and the segment aired on June 18, 2024. *Línea Abierta* is the first and only Spanish-language news show broadcast nationally over the public radio satellite system. Hundreds of thousands of listeners tune in every week.

At the close of 2024, **Worksafe** submitted further briefing on why the law supports preserving confidentiality of complainants who come forward to participate in the appeals process. Due to the groundbreaking Statement of Interest that Cal/OSHA issued, CCIJ has applied for the Deferred Action for Labor Enforcement.

Highlights & Training



BWI Trainings were held in 2024, in March, June, August, and September, and October.

In January, Jora led a health and safety training for the Communication Workers of America.

In May, Jora and AnaStacia offered trainings for the Pro Bono Institute on common workplace safety and procedures and employer responsibilities in relation to natural disasters.

In July, Karin did a training in Spanish on Worker Health, Safety and Rights for Vision y Compromiso and another training about filing complaints for a CWOP gathering. Karín, with our partner, California Collaborative also provided a training with

In October, Jora did a training on Cultural Humility for the Immigrant Legal Resource Center. Jora also presented in a panel on Union and Employee Participation in the Work and Missions of OSHA and State Departments of Labor: Walkarounds and Beyond at the American Bar Association's Annual Labor and Employment Law Conference in November.

In November, AnaStacia presented on the new Workplace Violence Prevention law, SB 553, in a training sponsored by the Legal Aid Association of California (LAAC).



Highlights of our Coalition Work in 2024

Worksafe is actively involved in and/or offers legal support to several important coalitions which protect and advance worker rights and well being, including the California Coalition for Worker Power (CCWP), the Coalition of Low-Wage and Immigrant Worker Advocates (CLIWA), the California Work & Family Coalition (CAWFC), the California Domestic Worker Coalition (CDWC), the Wildfire Resource Group (WRG), and Safety Net 4 All.



The effectiveness of CWOP is well documented in helping workers know and access their rights. We look forward to continuing this good work in the coming years.

Legislative Victories



**Defeating the Taxpayer
Deception Act with CAWFC**

**Passing SB 1350, which gives
health and safety protections to
domestic workers employed by
agencies, with the CDWC**

Defending PAGA & CWOP
Funding with CLIWA and CCWP

Legislative Victories continued



Passing SB 1101, which implements procedures for cultural and prescribed burns for preventing wildfires, with Pacific Forest Trust leading the efforts on the bill. The Wildfire Resources Working Group is a group of diverse stakeholders that meet together to find a common thread to support wildfire smoke initiatives.

Defending PAGA & CWOP
Funding with CLIWA and CCWP

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Passing SB 1090, AB 2123, and AB 2499, which make Paid Family Leave, Safe Leave, and Disability Insurance stronger and easier to access, with CWFC.

Worksafe's 'MachineGuard' –
Blogging for public information and education

We published numerous blogs over the past year to help raise awareness of health and safety issues and ensure that workers are represented in conversations which tend to be dominated by employer-side law firms. Please read and share with your networks!

- ["It's Murderous": Reflections from the Trenches of the Social Justice War](#)
- [Reparations and State Inaction](#)
- [The Cal/OSHA Staffing Crisis: A Looming Challenge for Workplace Safety](#)
- [Indoor Heat Standard Delayed by Administration](#)
- [California Heat Protections: Update](#)
- [Worker Rights and the Carceral System](#)
- [Cal/OSHA Staffing Problems Persist—And So Do We](#)

Cal/OSHA Staffing Crisis



Over the last year, a great deal of attention has been brought to this very urgent and yet longstanding issue, thanks in part to the efforts of the Worksafe-led OSH Strategy Group. We have kept the spotlight on this unacceptable situation which imperils all of us who work in California.

Worksafe in the Media

- Dying in the Fields as Temperatures Soar, Inside Climate News, 1/26/24
- California Nears Approving Nation's Toughest Lead Exposure Rules, Bloomberg Law, 2/14/24
- Newsom stays silent on Cal-OSHA staffing crisis as legislators and advocates call for action, Sacramento Bee/AP, 3/13/24
- California workers must wait even longer for indoor heat protections, CalMatters, 3/21/24
- 'They Are at Risk': California Workers May Wait Longer for Heat-Illness Protections, KQED News, 3/22/24
- California wants to protect indoor workers from heat. That goal is now in limbo, NPR/Wisconsin Public Radio; LAist, 3/23/24
- California tries again to protect workers from indoor heat — except in prisons, CalMatters, 4/18/24
- Will Workers Be Protected from Extreme Heat on the Job?, Marketplace Public Radio, 6/3/24
- A workplace safety board bucked Gavin newsom. Now he's shaking it up, CalMatters, 6/11/24
- Silver Taube: An indoor workplace heat standard is long overdue San Jose Spotlight, 6/13/24
- State board approves protections for hot workplaces, LA Times/AP, 6/20/24
- New rules will protect California workers from dangerous heat indoors, NPR KQED, 6/21/24
- California to become third state to mandate heat protections for indoor workers, NBC News, 6/21/24
- Staffing issues still plague the investigative unit at Cal-OSHA, Sacramento Bee/AP, 6/23/24
- New Heat Protection for CA Workers Excludes Prisons, KPFA/Law and Disorder, 6/26/24
- New workplace standards promise Bay Area fast food workers relief from scorching temperatures, El Timpano, 7/30/24
- Business Concerns Loom Over California's Indoor Worker Heat Rule, Bloomberg Law, 8/14/24
- Weeks after California's indoor heat standards took effect, workers still swelter, LA Times/AP, 8/29/24
- The Bee reported Cal/OSHA's understaffing endangered state workers. What's happened since?, Sacramento Bee/AP, 9/9/24
- Collective Care: In an overheating world, workers are learning to organize for their own protection, Earth Island Journal, 9/18/24
- Punching In: Su's Future at Labor Unclear Even if Harris Wins, Bloomberg, 11/4/24

Building a Joyful Team

Benita Gordon was initially hired as our *Administrative Coordinator* in February of this year and by August was promoted to *Operations Manager*. Before joining **Worksafe**, Benita spent 15 years aiding the flow and function of companies in multiple sectors, including law firms, tech companies, medical specialists, hotel management and applied behavior analysis. Seeing the structure of these different companies provided broad firsthand insight into effective organization. Benita believes that by helping people see things from different perspectives, and teaching various organization techniques, she contributes not just to the individual but the establishment as whole, and offers some of the most effective ways to strengthen the foundation of organizations in order to enable rapid growth.

Azucena Garcia-Ferro joined the **Worksafe** team in August on a part time basis as a Worker Advocate. She was born and raised in San Diego, CA to immigrant parents from Mexico. *Azucena* grew up in a low-income community, San Ysidro, and was raised by her mom. Her mom, Martha, who worked in the fast food industry and as a cleaner, is her strength and inspiration. At the tender age of two, *Azucena* was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy, a developmental disability, and as a result, she has had 18 orthopedic surgeries in both of her legs. Living with a disability has made her aware of all the challenges, barriers, and struggles but also the joy that people with disabilities like her deal with daily. She is a very active member of her community, volunteering for various non-profit organizations such as the Adaptive Sports and Recreation Association (ASRA) in San Diego and mentoring first-generation Hispanic/Latino students pursuing higher education.

Cerina Talley-Ragsdale is the most recent addition to our staff, joining the team as *Administrative Assistant* just this November. *Cerina* was born in Alabama, with roots that spread across California, Alabama, and Texas, shaping her into the person she is today. She excelled in school, maintaining A/B honor roll, and found her love for teamwork on the softball field, where she first discovered the joy of being a supportive team player. Growing up, *Cerina* learned the importance of healthy communication, which became a core value she carries into every interaction. She has since dedicated herself to being a positive force for others, always sharing kindness and encouragement, knowing the impact a caring word can have on someone's day.

Staff

Azucena Garcia-Ferro, Worker Advocate
Benita Gordon, Operations Manager
Stephen Knight, Executive Director
Amira-Sade Moodie, Program Assistant
Cerina Talley-Ragsdale, Administrative Assistant
Jora Trang, Chief of Staff & Equity
Karín Umfrey, Senior Staff Attorney
Rachel van Geenhoven, Communications Manager
AnaStacia Nicol Wright, Policy Manager

Black Worker Initiative

- *Oraiu Amoni, Community Organizer*
- *Leonard Brown, Worker Leader*

BOARD

Alor Calderon, Chair – Employee Rights Center
Denyse Clancy – Kazan Law
Deogracia Cornelio – Warehouse Worker Resource Center
Alejandra Domenzain – UC Labor and Occupational Health Program (LOHP)
Carisa Harris-Adamson – UCSF & UCB School of Public Health
Robert Harrison – UCSF Division of Occupational & Environmental Medicine
Amy Hines-Shaikh – Wild Cat Consulting
Sarah Kanbar – Beeson, Tayer & Bodine
Elmer Lizardi – California Labor Federation
Xochitl Lopez – UC Davis Labor and Community Center
Kim Savage – Kim Savage Law
Ruth Silver Taube – Katharine George Alexander Community Law Center, SCU School of Law
Cheryl Wallach – Ford Wallach

Organization names are listed for identification purposes only.

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Thank You for Your Ongoing Support!

This year we are once again aiming to raise a whopping \$25,000, and we remain far shy of our goal! Please donate to our campaign if you are able. Every little bit helps!



DONATE 

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