



Adhikaar * Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO * Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice New York * Mekong NYC * National Employment Law Project * New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health * Western NY Committee for Occupational Safety and Health * Workers United NY NJ Regional Joint Board

Dear Governor Hochul and Members of the NYS Senate and Assembly,

We, the undersigned, are organizations committed to gender equity, reproductive justice, and the rights of women workers to health, safety and dignity, who are collectively calling for the passage of the [Nail Salon Minimum Standards Council Act \(S1800/A378\)](#), which will establish an industry council of workers, small business owners, and government representatives to recommend new labor standards for nail salons across New York State. In addition, the bill creates a separate committee of economic experts to study the industry and recommend new fair minimum pricing for nail services in order to combat the race to the bottom among nail salons to offer the lowest prices - which often comes at the expense of worker safety and well-being.

Nail salon work is overwhelmingly performed by immigrant women of color, both in New York and around the nation. Nail technicians (e.g., manicurists and pedicurists) make up the vast majority of New York's nail salon industry workforce, with 85% identifying as women. Among these workers, 73% identify as Asian or Pacific Islander and 21% identify as Hispanic or Latinx. Despite nail techs' organizing successes in the last several years, they still face exploitative conditions on the job. Nail techs continue to earn low wages, with many experiencing minimum wage and overtime violations, are routinely misclassified as independent contractors, are denied lunch breaks, lack benefits and/or paid time off, contend with discrimination and harassment, and more.

In addition, labor protections often neglect to create safeguards that adequately address the reproductive rights of workers who can become pregnant. Unsafe conditions are an everyday reality in nail salons, where exposure to toxic chemicals in glues, polishes, removers, and other products puts the largely women workforce at increased risk of harm to their reproductive health, as well as other illnesses like cancer and asthma. A 2022 survey revealed disturbingly higher prevalence of reproductive health issues among nail techs, including severe pain with menstruation, complications during their pregnancy, and birth defects in their children. The key findings showed that:

- 1 in 4 (25%) of nail tech respondents said they had complications during their pregnancies. In the U.S., approximately 8% of all pregnancies involve complications that, if left untreated, may harm the mother or the fetus.
- 8.5% of nail tech respondents said their child was born with abnormalities. In the U.S., between 2% and 3% of infants have one or more defects at birth, but the number increases to 5% by age one, since not all defects are discovered immediately after birth.

- 20% of nail tech respondents reported issues with their reproductive health. In comparison, about 11% of women of reproductive age in the U.S. have experienced fertility problems and 11% of women between the ages of 15 and 44 have endometriosis.

If New York State wants to be a national leader in reproductive health and rights, we must also protect workers' health and rights on the job. No worker should be unnecessarily exposed to harm in the workplace that infringes on their right to bodily autonomy and takes away their choice of whether or not to have healthy children.

We also want to be clear that a \$10 manicure is not a fair bargain for professional nail services. Low wages and poor working conditions in the industry are symptoms of how the art of nail care has been devalued and treated as cheap labor in our economy, simply because it is primarily done by immigrant women of color. Nail techs must undergo 250 hours of training, or spend a year as a trainee under a licensed nail tech and complete a 27-hour course, as well as pass both written and practical exams in order to receive their licenses in New York State. Despite these extensive requirements, immigrant women of color in this industry still can't make ends meet. They are often single mothers and sole breadwinners for their families, who must regularly make tough financial choices between housing, food and other necessities, and cannot even imagine the possibility of retiring with dignity at the end of their careers. This doesn't have to be the case - New York has the power to change this by giving workers a voice in their working conditions through the Nail Salon Minimum Standards Council Act.

Nail techs deserve good jobs, and it's long overdue. We urge you to enact S1800/A378 this session and bring about change in the lives of tens of thousands of women in the nail salon industry across New York State.

Signatories (in alphabetical order):

African Communities Together
Breast Cancer Prevention Partners
California Black Health Network
California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative
Carroll Gardens Association
Clean Beauty for Black Girls
Clemency Coalition of New York
Coalition of Labor Union Women
Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers Network
Her Justice
If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice
Jahajee Sisters
Legal Momentum
National Domestic Workers Alliance
National Institute for Reproductive Health
NYC Coalition for Domestic Work
Planned Parenthood of Greater New York
Sakhi for South Asian Women
Southeast Asian Defense Project
Until Justice Data Partners
WE ACT for Environmental Justice
Women's Voices for the Earth