

## LETTER IN SUPPORT OF THE NAIL SALON MINIMUM STANDARDS COUNCIL ACT

May 17, 2023

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

We, the undersigned, are labor and workers rights organizations committed to worker health, safety and dignity on the job, who collectively call for the passage of the [Nail Salon Minimum Standards Council Act \(S1800/A378\)](#). This proposed legislation 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 any benefits and/or paid time off, contend with discrimination and harassment, and more.

In addition, unsafe conditions are an everyday reality in nail salons, where exposure to known 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 conducted by the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health revealed disturbingly higher prevalence of reproductive health issues among nail techs, including more likely to experience severe pain with menstruation, complications during their pregnancy, and birth defects in their children.

These kinds of exploitative and unsafe working conditions should never be the norm in any industry. Workers in the nail salon industry can't make ends meet when their wages are stolen or when they are denied paid time off when they fall ill. They are often single mothers and/or 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. For communities of color — particularly the AAPI and Latina women who perform the overwhelming majority of work in our state's nail salons — these issues threaten our ability to build healthy and thriving communities across the state of New York.

As labor unions and worker organizations, we know that giving workers a voice and representation in their industry is an effective pathway to changing low road employer practices.

The nail salon industry must undergo systemic change, and its business model cannot depend on cutting corners on workers' rights. New York State has the power to create a just and sustainable nail salon industry 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 improve the lives of tens of thousands of workers in the nail salon industry across New York State.

*Signatories in alphabetical order*

32BJ SEIU  
ALIGN  
Brandworkers  
Coalition for Economic Justice  
Committee of Interns and Residents/SEIU  
Communications Workers of America, District 1  
Jobs with Justice  
Long Island Jobs with Justice  
National Day Laborer Organizing Network  
National Writers Union  
New York State Nurses Association  
New York Taxi Workers Alliance  
Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union  
Starbucks Workers United Downstate NY  
Street Vendor Project at Urban Justice Center  
Teamsters Joint Council 16  
United Auto Workers Region 9A  
Workers United NY NJ Regional Joint Board  
Workplace Project