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Proyecto Justicia Laboral

The New York State Senate
Public Hearing: Workforce Development
[February 2, Tuesday 1:00 PM]

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Thank you for the opportunity to testify at the Public Budget Hearing on Workforce Development.

My name is Ligia Gualpa and I'm the Executive Director of the **Workers Justice Project (WJP)**, one of the few worker centers that stayed open during the pandemic to provides emergency relief services to more than 18,000 day laborers, domestic workers and delivery workers — who were left to die without economic relief, without unemployment insurance, without medical insurance, without paid sick leave, without workers compensation and without essential workers' rights. While more than 413,800 workers were laid off, workers in industries like construction, house cleaning and restaurant industry continued to work in increasingly dangerous and unsanitary conditions.

In New York City, a growing number of working people, especially low-wage workers and Black and immigrant communities were forced to take on gig jobs with no essential rights. Just this month, **The City** reported the number of gig workers has increased by 60%. Why are more and more New Yorkers entering the gig economy?

The answer is simple. These are the only jobs available in the market and the only New Yorkers can rely on you to survive this crisis. However, these jobs don't offer prosperity nor for better opportunities for workers. These jobs are turning into the deadliest jobs and underpaid paid jobs in our state.

Let's just look at the fasten growing industries, where most immigrant, undocumented and indigenous communities have been working as essential workers through the pandemic.

More than 80,000 app-based food delivery workers are hired as gig workers by giant tech companies like Doordash, Grubhub, Uber, Relay and others. While these tech companies are making billions in pandemic profits, they are denying the most basic essential worker protections such as the right to be paid sick time leave, minimum wage, the right to a safe workplace and access to bathrooms. In addition to being denied basic workers' rights, the NYPD has failed to respond to the multiple reports of violent e-bike robberies and traffic crimes. Only this month, 3 deliveries have been killed and every day they are violently attacked. New York has failed to protect them. Our state has allowed these tech companies to abuse and exploit them at all cost.

Also, more than 200,000 domestic workers in New York City, mostly immigrant, undocument and indigenous women like Gloria were also left to clean and disinfect New Yorker's homes without safety equipment, without medical insurance and without the right to a safe workplace.

Lastly, more than 72,500 immigrant construction workers and day laborers were left to work without safety masks. During COVID-19, many were fired for getting infected by COVID-19 and thousands of dollars in wages were stolen by wealthy developers and General contractors who are building our city.

These are some of the industries that our state has failed to invest and protect. We hope to work more closely in ensuring the rights resources are allocated in these essential industries, but also that workers are protected and offer essential rights in times of COVID-19. Day Laborers, Domestic Workers and Delivery must be part of your budget priorities and during this year's budget negotiation process.