

# Urgent call launched to protect working children as exploitation soars across the U.S.

*CNN is spotlighting Freedom United's urgent campaign - a resounding call to stop the disturbing rollbacks of child labor laws across the U.S.*

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Responding to the escalating crisis of child labor exploitation in the U.S., CNN is spotlighting Freedom United's urgent campaign - a resounding call to stop the disturbing rollbacks of child labor laws across the U.S.

Alarming bills reveal a dangerous trend : several states are either passing or proposing bills that weaken crucial

child labor protections – all while child labor exploitation is on the rise and increasing in severity . This unsettling shift not only paves the way for human traffickers but also enables unscrupulous employers to prey on the most vulnerable members of society—our children.

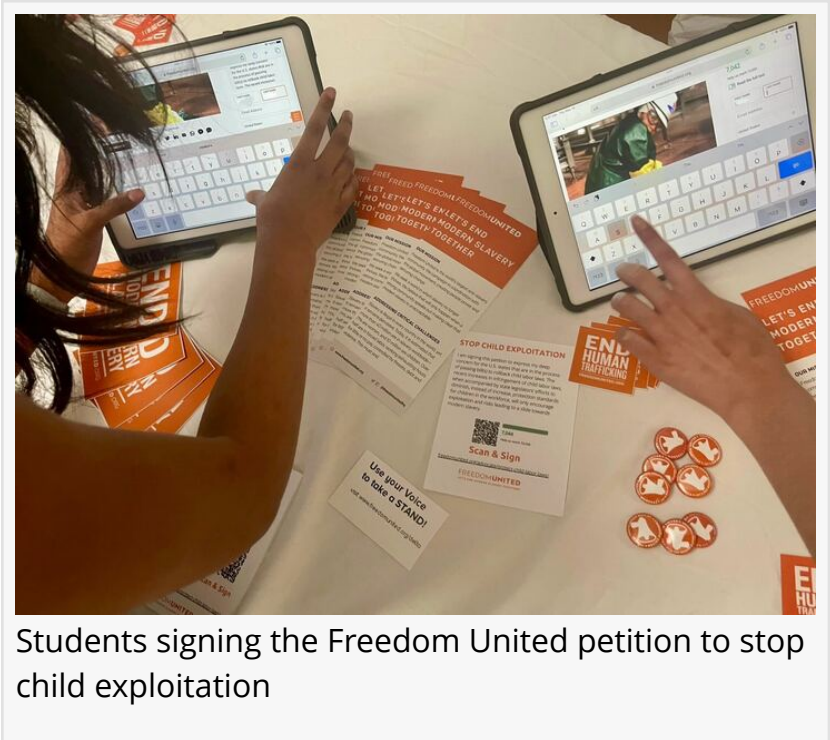
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Hazardous work is considered one of the worst forms of child labor, therefore legalizing it puts U.S. states on a slippery slope toward exploitation and forced labor.”

*Joanna Ewart-James,  
Executive Director at Freedom  
United*

“The consequences are potentially disastrous, you can't balance a perceived labor shortage on the backs of teen workers,” said Reid Maki, Director of the [Child Labor Coalition](#) and partner on Freedom United's campaign.

Contrary to the urgent need to strengthen laws safeguarding children from fatal injuries and egregious exploitation, states are instead pushing for measures to slash the minimum wage for minors, extend their working hours, and permit their employment in hazardous occupations.



Students signing the Freedom United petition to stop child exploitation

"Hazardous work is considered one of the worst forms of child labor, therefore legalizing that puts U.S. states on a slippery slope towards exploitation and forced labor." said Joanna Ewart-James, Executive Director at Freedom United speaking at #MyFreedomDay in Atlanta.

The trend reflects a coordinated multi-industry effort to increase access to cheap labor in ways that contradict federal protections. Children of families in poverty, especially those in Black, brown, and immigrant communities, stand to suffer the most harm.

Due to flaws in the U.S. immigration system, unaccompanied migrant youth face particularly high vulnerability to exploitation by employers. Waiting for delayed asylum processing, they cannot obtain work permits for extended periods, leading to poverty and a desperate need to accept exploitative work to cover essential expenses. This situation leaves migrant children at the mercy of employers without right of recourse.

Recent heart-wrenching stories paint a grim reality:

- 16-year-old Duvan from Guatemala lost his life in July 2023 when he was pulled into a deboning machine during his late-night shift at Mar-Jac Poultry, a meat processing plant.
- In November last year, Michael, another 16-year-old boy, died while operating a conveyer at a sawmill in Wisconsin and got caught in the machinery.
- In August of 2022, a 14-year-old girl showed up to school with acid burns on her hands and knees from her overnight shift cleaning a slaughterhouse kill floor the night before.



Freedom United is calling the participants of #MyFreedomDay to action to stand up against modern slavery



Students debunking the myths of human trafficking at Atlanta International School on My Freedom Day

“There are so many stories coming out in the media of youth, mainly migrant youth, being severely exploited all over the country. Somehow, children working all night in the most hazardous occupations, even for adults, is suddenly ‘just business as usual.’ We started sharing these stories with the Freedom United community, a large portion of whom are based in the U.S., and they were just as outraged and eager to get involved.” Said Ellie Finkelstein, Campaigner and News Editor at Freedom United.

The campaign calls on the public to sign a petition to kill bills that roll back on current child labor laws.

The mission of the campaign:

1. Pressure states: Halt the enactment of bills that weaken child labor laws.
2. Demand enforcement: Enforce measures that protect children from the worst forms of child labor.
3. Prioritize Protection: Strengthen adherence to the Fair Labor Standards Act nationwide, making child protection from the worst forms of labor a top priority in every jurisdiction.

About #MyFreedomDay:

The CNN Freedom Project shines a light on what modern-day slavery is and how it exists in different capacities all over the globe. The project amplifies the voices of survivors of modern slavery and holds governments and businesses accountable. #MyFreedomDay which will take place on March 14, 2024, is a day where students all over the world raise awareness about the prevalence of modern slavery and human trafficking.

<https://www.cnn.com/world/myfreedomday>

About Freedom United:

Freedom United is the world’s largest community dedicated to ending conditions human trafficking and modern slavery. The non-profit organization mobilizes a united community to create power for change by making the public key stakeholders in the ending of modern slavery by equipping millions of supporters with awareness, education and actionable ways to take action that drives change and influences businesses, governments and society to change which allow modern slavery to thrive. <https://www.freedomunited.org/>

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