

US Senators to Propose Bill to Combat Child Labor



US Senators Cory Booker (D-NJ) and Peter Welch (D-VT) will introduce legislation to hold corporations accountable for their child labor practices. The Child Labor Exploitation Act bill will prohibit the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) from contracting with companies that either commit labor law violations or contract with vendors that commit labor law violations.

The proposed legislation includes four measures to discourage corporations from illegally exploiting child labor. The first measure would require companies competing for USDA contracts to disclose their worker and labor safety violations. As part of this measure, potential contractors would also be required to disclose any labor and safety violations committed by their contractors dating back three years.

The second measure would give the US Secretary of Labor the power to determine what corrective measures a company and its contractors must take to be eligible for a contract with the USDA. The bill would also require the Secretary of Labor to disclose those companies that are ineligible for USDA contracts based on their serious, repeated, or pervasive violations of labor laws.

To ensure the effectiveness of these measures, the proposed legislation includes transparency measures for the USDA and Department of Labor (DOL) to follow to ensure compliance.

The Senators have introduced this bill in response to an investigation into child labor exploitation allegations at US meatpacking facilities in December 2022. The DOL found that children between the ages of 13 and 17 were working overnight shifts at these facilities.

This bill is the latest effort to combat child labor, particularly migrant child labor, in the US. In February, the DOL announced a course of action to address the 69 percent increase in child labor it found since 2018.

The proposed legislation aims to hold corporations accountable for their child labor practices by implementing stricter measures to ensure compliance with labor laws. The Child Labor Exploitation Act would prohibit companies with a history of labor law violations or who contract with vendors that commit labor law violations from being awarded contracts with the USDA.

The bill would enable the USDA to make more informed decisions about which companies are eligible for contracts by requiring companies to disclose their worker and labor safety violations. The proposed legislation would also give the Secretary of Labor the power to determine what corrective measures companies and their contractors must take to be eligible for a USDA contract.

To ensure that the measures are carried out effectively, the Child Labor Exploitation Act would lay out transparency measures for the USDA and DOL to follow. These measures would include disclosing companies ineligible for USDA contracts based on their serious, repeated, or pervasive violations of labor laws.

The Senators' decision to introduce the bill follows an investigation by the DOL into child labor exploitation allegations at US meatpacking facilities in December 2022. The DOL found that children between the ages of 13 and 17 were working overnight shifts at these facilities, in violation of labor laws.

The Child Labor Exploitation Act is the latest effort to combat child labor, particularly migrant child labor, in the US. The proposed legislation is important in addressing the exploitation of children in the US and holding corporations accountable for their labor practices.

Overall, the Child Labor Exploitation Act represents an important effort by US Senators to tackle the issue of child labor and ensure that companies are held accountable for their labor practices. By implementing stricter measures to ensure compliance with labor laws and promoting transparency, the proposed legislation aims to protect children's rights and prevent their exploitation.