

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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***Workers' Rights Advocates Respond to Recent Garment Sweeps:***  
**ENFORCING LABOR LAWS MUST BE MORE THAN JUST A "PHOTO-OP"**

Last week, California's Labor & Workforce Development Agency conducted multi-agency sweeps of garment factories throughout the state as part of the Administration's fledgling effort to enforce labor, tax, and licensing laws in the so-called "underground economy." Leading advocates for the rights of low-wage workers and immigrants – Asian Law Caucus (ALC), Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC), Garment Worker Center (GWC), and Sweatshop Watch – issued the following joint statement in response to the recent garment sweeps:

"We applaud the Governor for finally taking notice of the appalling, sweatshop-like conditions in the garment industry – a multibillion-dollar industry notorious for rampant health, safety, and labor violations. We hope that the recent sweeps represent more than just a photo-op for the Governor and reflect a genuine commitment on his part to eliminate the exploitative, illegal, and inhumane working conditions which epitomize garment and other low-wage industries.

"We remain extremely concerned, however, that the recent workplace raids appear to sweep aside the concerns of workers whose rights have been violated – without actually helping them. At minimum, the State must ensure that workers who toil in factories that are cited and fined for labor law violations get paid what they are owed. To the extent the State fails to recover back wages, it is the workers – not their exploitative employers – who wind up paying the price in lost wages and jobs.

"Furthermore, the State should not let the real perpetrators off the hook: the clothing retailers and manufacturers who profit most from sweatshops. By targeting factories at the bottom of the supply chain, the garment sweeps do little to address the root cause of sweatshops. The Administration must fully enforce the state's landmark anti-sweatshop law, which requires companies that produce garments in sweatshops to guarantee payment of minimum wage and overtime.

"Most importantly, the State must take proactive measures to prevent fear, confusion, and mistrust amongst workers during sweeps. We have already received numerous calls from workers who are fearful of the next workplace raid and retaliation by factory owners. The dearth of proper outreach and communication by the State has fanned mass confusion among workers, many of whom believe the sweeps are immigration raids. We have received reports of factory owners forcing workers to lie to state inspectors about illegal working conditions under threat of losing their jobs. We encourage workers with any questions concerning the recent garment sweeps to contact the Garment Worker Center Hotline in Los Angeles at (888) 449-6115 (Cantonese, Mandarin, Spanish, English) or the Asian Law Caucus in San Francisco at (415) 896-1701 (Cantonese, Mandarin, English)."

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