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June 11, 2026
House Committee on Economic Competitiveness
House Bill 5727 Youth Employment Standards Act
Testimony from the Michigan Immigrant Rights Center

The Michigan Immigrant Rights Center (MIRC) is a statewide legal resource center that works to ensure the rights of immigrants are respected and upheld across Michigan. We oppose HB 5727 as it puts some of Michigan's most vulnerable children in serious jeopardy of labor exploitation.

MIRC is honored to represent many immigrant and refugee children. For years, we have screened our young clients for workplace abuses and educated them about workplace rights and enforcement mechanisms. Only a few years ago, national reporting by The New York Times brought serious concerns of the exploitation and trafficking of migrant children in Michigan into focus (*see* Hannah Drier, Alone and Exploited, Migrant Children Work Brutal Jobs Across the U.S., NYT, Feb. 28, 2023). This reporting shed light on the deplorable conditions unaccompanied immigrant children in Michigan and elsewhere face in the workplace. Unfortunately, the exploitation of children in the workplace has only grown. For example, the Economic Policy Institute reports that "[i]n 2025, more cases of federal child labor violations were uncovered than during any other year since the Great Recession, and hazardous work violations ticked up again after declining in the year prior" (*see* State lawmakers continued to weaken child labor protections in 2026, EPI, Jun. 2, 2026).

MIRC engaged in numerous conversations and forums with lawmakers, state and federal labor enforcement agencies, and law enforcement, who were appalled by the conditions children were facing and were committed to preventing these kinds of abuses from continuing. Ensuring that there is accountability for unscrupulous employers who prey on children's vulnerability to reduce their bottom line is an essential piece of preventing child exploitation and trafficking. HB 5727 does the opposite, not only by eliminating the important safeguards created by 2024 PA 196, but also by providing even fewer protections than existed prior to 2024 PA 196.

Eliminating the youth work permit system means there will be no record of which employers are employing minors. There will be no effective oversight of the types of jobs, hours, or wages minors are making. Employers will have no oversight of their responsibility to verify children's age, no obligation to obtain permission or verification from a child's school, and no obligation to obtain permission from a child's parent or guardian. This leaves vulnerable children with no protection and effectively no recourse.

The bill would further allow children under 16 years to work up to 48 hours a week (8 hours a day, 6 days a week) when school is not in session, and allows LEO to grant deviations for minors to be employed between midnight and 5am, and to perform work "hazardous or injurious to [their] health or personal well-being." These allowances create serious health and safety concerns.

Thank you for your consideration and we urge you to act to protect Michigan's children, and oppose HB 5727.

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