



# State Protections for Meatpacking Workers

Update to 2015 Evaluation Report

March 2016

## Problems Identified

- **Insufficient Agency Action.** The Packinghouse Workers Bill of Rights requires the Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) to assist meatpacking employers in informing employees of rights outlined in law. However, DLI had sent only a single mailing to employers in the seven years since the law was passed.
- **Unclear and Outdated Legislation.** Important terms used in the Packinghouse Workers Bill of Rights are not clearly defined. It is unclear if meatpacking employers of all sizes or companies specializing in cleaning meatpacking facilities are subject to its requirements. The law's requirement that employers provide information in an employee's "native language" is overly prescriptive and may be burdensome. Additionally, a different law requiring meatpacking employers to provide information in English and Spanish to employees recruited from outside Minnesota is outdated. Many current meatpacking employees speak Asian or African languages.
- **Incomplete Company Identification.** DLI's Occupational Safety and Health Division (MNOSHA) targeted meatpacking companies for more frequent inspections than other employers because of the industry's higher incidence of worker injuries. However, the list of companies MNOSHA used relied on self-reported, incomplete information. As a result, some meatpacking companies were less likely to be inspected.

## Changes Implemented

- **Increased DLI Outreach.** DLI posted relevant information to its website, developed posters for the Packinghouse Workers Bill of Rights in seven languages, sent out a mailing to meatpacking companies with relevant information, trained investigators in handling questions about this law, and invited feedback from meatpacking companies.
- **Improved Employer List.** MNOSHA adopted our recommendation for improving its list of meatpacking employers.

## Action Needed

- **Clarify Statutes.** The Legislature should clarify and update legal requirements for meatpacking employers in *Minnesota Statutes* 2015, 179.86 and 181.635.