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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,  
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6300

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January 22, 2024

## VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

Karl Schledwitz  
Chief Executive Officer  
Monogram Food Solutions, LLC  
530 Oak Court  
Suite 400  
Memphis, Tennessee 38117

Dear Mr. Schledwitz:

I am troubled to discover that your company, Monogram Food Solutions, LLC (Monogram) and its subsidiary Monogram Meat Snacks LLC, was found to have employed two minors under the age of 18 in direct violation of federal child labor laws.<sup>1</sup> As you know, on July 6, 2023, Monogram received a judgment from the United States District Court for the District of Minnesota demanding that Monogram cease and desist from engaging in “oppressive child labor” and pay a civil monetary penalty of \$30,276.<sup>2</sup> This follows an investigation by the U.S. Department of Labor’s (DOL) Wage and Hour Division (WHD), which found that Monogram used illegal child labor to manufacture food goods, requiring Monogram to halt shipments of the identified products.<sup>3</sup>

Pursuant to the District Court’s order, Monogram agreed that it would, among other things:

- a. Cease and desist from engaging in oppressive child labor or employing any oppressive child labor;
- b. Conduct audits of all current employees at all of its facilities throughout the United States regarding whether it employs any additional employees under the age of 18 in unlawful positions;
- c. Make, keep, and preserve records showing the wages, hours, and other conditions of work for each employee, including records of employees’ birth dates for those under the age of 19;

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<sup>1</sup> *Julie Su, Acting Sec’y of Lab. v. Monogram Food Sol. et al*, No. 23-cv-2007 (July 6, 2023) (Consent Order and Judgment), <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OPA/newsreleases/2023/07/SOL20231505.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> *Nationwide Food Manufacturer Agrees to Companywide Compliance with Child Labor Laws After Investigation Finds 2 Teens Employed Illegally in Minnesota*, U.S. DEP’T OF LAB. (July 7, 2023), <https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/whd/whd20230707>.

<sup>3</sup> *Nationwide Food Manufacturer Agrees to Companywide Compliance with Child Labor Laws After Investigation Finds 2 Teens Employed Illegally in Minnesota*, U.S. DEP’T OF LAB. (July 7, 2023), <https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/whd/whd20230707>.

- d. Update workplace policies and conduct routine child labor training for management staff;
- e. Hire a third-party consultant or compliance specialist with knowledge and experience in compliance with child labor laws; and,
- f. Impose disciplinary sanctions on any management personnel responsible for child labor violations occurring after the District Court entered its order.<sup>4</sup>

The discovery that Monogram employed children to operate meat-processing equipment in its Minnesota location raises substantial questions about its employment practices at its remaining six locations in Indiana, Iowa, Massachusetts, Tennessee, Virginia, and Wisconsin. Unfortunately, Monogram's violations are one of many exposed child labor violations in the meat-packing industry,<sup>5</sup> all of which raise serious questions about the industry's business practices and the ways Congress can ensure all children—especially those who immigrated to the United States and are particularly vulnerable to the harms of working under dangerous conditions—receive the protection they deserve

Earlier this year, Senator Bernie Sanders and I sent a letter to Packers Sanitation Services, Inc. (PSSI) following reports that PSSI employed more than 102 children between 13 to 17 years of age in hazardous conditions and had them working overnight shifts at meat processing facilities.<sup>6</sup> In furtherance of this effort to examine your industry, and in to order to better understand the steps Monogram has taken and/or intends to take to ensure that it no longer illegally employs child laborers, I ask that you answer the following questions, on a question-by-question basis, by February 5, 2024. For those questions that require the production of documents, we request that these documents be unredacted and produced in electronic form.

1. Has Monogram changed its policies and procedures to ensure all employees are of legal age and/or eligible to work in the particular job they are hired into? In addition to answering this question, please produce the following documents:
  - a. A copy of all Monogram document retention policies for maintaining and preserving employee records in place between January 1, 2022 and July 6, 2023.
  - b. A copy of all Monogram document retention policies for maintaining and preserving employee records implemented since the July 6, 2023 District Court order went into effect, including all such policies currently in effect. To the extent Monogram maintains different policies for any of its individual locations, provide all such policies for each location.

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<sup>4</sup> *Julie Su, Acting Sec'y of Lab. v. Monogram Food Sol. et al*, No. 23-cv-2007 (July 6, 2023) (Consent Order and Judgment), <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OPA/newsreleases/2023/07/SOL20231505.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> *Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services Announce New Efforts to Combat Exploitative Child Labor*, U.S. DEP'T OF LAB. (Feb. 27, 2023), (finding a 69% increase in illegal child labor since 2018).

<sup>6</sup> *Ranking Member Cassidy, Chair Sanders Seek Answers on Child Labor Violations*, UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS (Mar, 30, 2023), <https://www.help.senate.gov/ranking/newsroom/press/ranking-member-cassidy-chair-sanders-seek-answers-on-child-labor-violations>.

- c. If all Monogram locations do not follow the same document retention policies, please explain why.
2. Has Monogram changed its training materials for its managers relating to its compliance with child labor law provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)? In addition to answering this question, please produce the following documents:
  - a. A copy of Monogram's training materials for all managers that relate to compliance with child labor law provisions of the FLSA prior to the July 6, 2023 District Court order and judgment.
  - b. A copy of Monogram's training materials for all managers that relate to compliance with child labor law provisions of the FLSA following the July 6, 2023 District Court order and judgment.
3. What steps does Monogram take to ensure that, in the event it hires minors to work at any of its locations or facilities, those minors do not work in prohibited and/or dangerous locations or perform prohibited and/or dangerous tasks?
  - a. In addition to answering this question, please produce a copy of all Monogram policies that relate to hiring and/or employing minors at any Monogram location or facility.
4. Please identify all third-party consultants, including those hired to maintain compliance with the July 6, 2023 District Court order and judgment, hired to ensure Monogram complies with the child labor provisions of the FLSA.
5. Has Monogram taken any adverse employment actions against current or former managers since July 6, 2023 related to violations of the child labor provisions of the FLSA? If so, please provide the following information:
  - a. The location(s) where the management personnel was employed;
  - b. The nature of the violation and adverse action taken; and,
  - c. The date Monogram took the adverse employment action.
6. What policies, procedures, and/or other system(s) does Monogram use to confirm the eligibility of their employees to work in the United States?
  - a. If Monogram uses E-Verify and/or other web-based systems, does Monogram ensure that management personnel do not misuse these systems or engage in unreported employment? If so, how?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Bill Cassidy, M.D.

Bill Cassidy, M.D

Ranking Member

U.S. Senate Committee on Health  
Education, Labor, and Pensions