

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
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Attorney General Karl Racine Applauds Passage of Three Bills Enhancing Protections for Vulnerable District Residents

Bills Fight Wage Theft and Notario Fraud and Clarify Consumer Protections

WASHINGTON, D. C. – Attorney General Karl A. Racine today applauded the Council’s passage of three bills that will provide additional legal tools to help the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) protect vulnerable District residents. District workers, immigrant communities, and low-income renters are among those who will benefit from this legislation, which combats wage theft and notario fraud and clarifies consumer protections regarding affordable housing units.

“Each of these bills will improve our ability to protect vulnerable District residents,” said Attorney General Karl A. Racine. **“I’d like to thank the Council for clarifying and expanding the enforcement authority of the Office of the Attorney General through these pieces of legislation, thereby giving us more tools uphold the public interest. We now are better able to stand up for workers, protect the District’s immigrant communities from fraudsters, and help gain compensation for tenants who have paid their hard-earned money in rent while receiving substandard housing from their landlords.”**

The Council passed the following bills:

- **The Wage Theft Prevention Clarification and Overtime Fairness Amendment Act of 2016 (B21-020)** *(this legislation incorporated provisions originally submitted in OAG’s “Wage Enforcement Initiative Amendment Act of 2016”)*
 - This bill will help ensure that workers actually receive the wages they earn.
 - It grants subpoena power to OAG, clarifies OAG’s enforcement authority in cases where employers fail to pay workers, and provides for the recovery of reasonable attorneys’ fees and costs from employers who are found to have illegally withheld wages.

- OAG greatly appreciated the opportunity to work closely with Chairman Phil Mendelson and Councilmember Elissa Silverman on this bill.
- **The Omnibus Public Safety and Justice Amendment Act of 2016 (B21-724) (previously known as “Immigration Services Protection Act of 2016”)**
 - This bill combats so-called *notario* fraud, a type of scam in which individuals falsely claim to offer immigration services and legal advice. Non-citizens often pay hundreds or even thousands of dollars to fraudsters, only to find out that they will never obtain a green card, legal immigration status, or other crucial benefits because they received incorrect advice.
 - The bill will protect immigrant communities by prohibiting unqualified individuals from performing immigration services, requiring that services be performed before fees are charged, imposing contractual requirements that protect consumers, and mandating that consumers have access to all documents prepared on their behalf. It also makes violators these provisions subject to penalties, including fines and restitution.
 - Bill 21-724 was [introduced by Attorney General Racine earlier this year](#), and OAG worked closely with Councilmember Kenyan McDuffie and the Executive on the final version of the legislation.
- **The At-Risk Tenant Protection Clarifying Emergency Amendment Act of 2016**
 - This bill helps to protect low-income renters and preserve affordable housing units.
 - It will clarify OAG’s ability to hold landlords accountable under the District’s Consumer Protection Procedures Act if landlords force tenants to live in squalid conditions or commit other significant lease violations, impose illegal fees on tenants, or violate security deposit laws.
 - It will also help to recover restitution for tenants in these situations and seek penalties to deter landlords from committing violations.
 - OAG thanks Councilmember Anita Bonds for championing this important bill.

Consumers who have been victimized by immigration service providers and tenants with serious concerns about landlord practices may contact the OAG Office of Consumer Protection at (202) 442-9828.