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Press Release

For Immediate Release

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**Workers Denounce Wage Theft:**  
**Demand their Stolen Wages**

A group of former employees from Hope Head Start and members of EL CENTRO De Igualdad y Derechos, an immigrants' rights and workers' justice organization, held a protest today publicly denouncing their cases of wage theft. Wage theft is against the law and includes the failure to pay the mandated minimum wage, forcing workers to work off the clock, the non-payment of overtime, the non-payment of a final paycheck, and the misclassification of workers.

The protesters held signs stating "This employer doesn't pay their workers", "We Care for ABQ's Kids. Hope Nursery is robbing money from ours" and "We 'HOPE' you have our paychecks." One of the protesters, UNM student and victim of wage theft Cindy Jazmin Flores, said she stopped working with the childcare provider after she realized she wasn't getting paid for her services. "I did not get paid for my first three weeks of work. The office administrator kept saying I needed to work an extra two weeks in order to receive my first paycheck", Flores said. The rest of the workers share similar stories of no payment for their services provided.

The workers already filed a wage-claim with the NM Department of Workforce Solutions in November of last year, and although the department issued an order in their favor, the workers still haven't been paid. "What we want is to let the public know that wage theft is happening at this place, and to also let the parents know that the people who are taking care of their children are being mistreated and that their wages are being stolen", Flores said.

Wage theft is rampant in New Mexico. According to a 2013 study by UNM in collaboration with Somos Un Pueblo Unido, 1 out of 4 Mexican immigrant workers acknowledge that they have been victims of wage theft, and the percentage rises to approximately 30% for Mexican undocumented workers who are particularly vulnerable to wage theft.

Flores explained the financial hardship she experienced after not receiving payment for her work, "I had no money to pay for my school expenses. This situation created a feeling of insecurity and frustration of how to make ends meet, but more importantly I was worried about the other workers who have families to support," she said.

"Wage theft robs workers of their ability to care for their families and their dignity to be paid for the vital work they perform. In addition, it robs the government of billions of dollars nationwide of tax revenue and isn't fair to all the good business out there", said Mauricio De Segovia, workers' rights community organizer with EI CENTRO.

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