

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2021

FILED SENATE  
Mar 31, 2021  
S.B. 446  
PRINCIPAL CLERK

S

D

SENATE BILL DRS15196-LR-49

Short Title: Wage Theft Act. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Mohammed, Foushee, and Robinson (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
2 AN ACT AMENDING THE LABOR LAWS OF NORTH CAROLINA TO END WAGE  
3 THEFT.

4 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

5 SECTION 1.(a) G.S. 95-25.2 reads as rewritten:

6 "§ 95-25.2. Definitions.

7 ~~In this Article, unless the context otherwise requires:~~The following definitions apply in this  
8 Article:

- 9 (1) ~~"Agriculture" includes farming~~Agriculture. – Farming in all its branches  
10 performed by a farmer or on a farm as an incident to or in conjunction with  
11 farming operations.
- 12 (2) ~~"Commissioner" means the Commissioner.~~ – The Commissioner of Labor.
- 13 (3) ~~"Employ" means to Employ.~~ – To suffer or permit to work.
- 14 (4) ~~"Employee" includes any Employee.~~ – Any individual employed by an  
15 employer.
- 16 (5) ~~"Employer" includes any Employer.~~ – Any person acting directly or indirectly  
17 in the interest of an employer in relation to an employee.
- 18 (5a) Employment status. – The status of an individual, under the usual  
19 common-law rules applicable in determining the employee-employer  
20 relationship, as an employee or as an independent contractor (or other  
21 individual who is not an employee).
- 22 (5b) Enterprise. – The related activities performed either through unified  
23 operations or common control by any person or persons for a common  
24 business purpose and includes all such activities whether performed in one or  
25 more establishments or by one or more corporate units but shall not include  
26 the related activities performed for such enterprise by an independent  
27 contractor or franchisee.
- 28 (6) ~~"Establishment" means a~~Establishment. – A physical location where business  
29 is conducted.
- 30 (7) ~~"The Fair Labor Standards Act" means the Fair Labor Standards Act.~~ – The  
31 Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as amended and as the same may be  
32 amended from time to time by the United States Congress.
- 33 (8) ~~"Hours worked" includes all~~Hours worked. – All time an employee is  
34 employed.
- 35 (8a) Intentional. – The employer consciously committed the act which violated the  
36 statute.



\* D R S 1 5 1 9 6 - L R - 4 9 \*

- 1 (9) ~~"Payday" means that~~ Payday. – That day designated for payment of wages due  
2 by virtue of the employment relationship.
- 3 (10) ~~"Pay periods" may~~ Pay periods. – May be daily, weekly, biweekly,  
4 semimonthly, or monthly.
- 5 (11) ~~"Person" means an~~ Person. – An individual, partnership, association,  
6 corporation, business trust, legal representative, or any organized group of  
7 persons. For the purposes of G.S. 95-25.2, G.S. 95-25.3, G.S. 95-25.14, and  
8 G.S. 95-25.20, it also means the State of North Carolina, any city, town,  
9 county, or municipality, or any State or local agency or instrumentality of  
10 government. The Government of the United States and any agency of the  
11 United States (including the United States Postal Service and Postal Rate  
12 Commission) are not included as persons for any purpose under this Article.
- 13 (12) ~~"Seasonal food service establishment" means a~~ Seasonal food service  
14 establishment. – A restaurant, food and drink stand or other establishment  
15 generally recognized as a commercial food service establishment, preparing  
16 and serving food to the public but operating 180 days or less per year.
- 17 (13) ~~"Seasonal religious or nonprofit educational conference center or a seasonal~~  
18 ~~amusement or recreational establishment" means an~~ Seasonal religious or  
19 nonprofit educational conference center or a seasonal amusement or  
20 recreational establishment. – An establishment which does not operate for  
21 more than seven months in any calendar year, or during the preceding calendar  
22 year had average receipts for any six months of such year of not more than  
23 thirty-three and one-third percent (33 1/3%) of its average receipts for the  
24 other six months of that year.
- 25 (14) ~~"Tipped employee" means any~~ Tipped employee. – Any employee who  
26 customarily receives more than twenty dollars (\$20.00) a month in tips.
- 27 (15) ~~"Tip" shall mean any~~ Tip. – Any money or part thereof over and above the  
28 actual amount due a business for goods, food, drink, services or articles sold  
29 which is paid in cash or by credit card, or is given to or left for an employee  
30 by a patron or patrons of the business where the employee is employed.
- 31 (16) ~~"Wage" Wage.~~ – Wage paid to an employee means compensation for labor or  
32 services rendered by an employee whether determined on a time, task, piece,  
33 job, day, commission, or other basis of calculation, and the reasonable cost as  
34 determined by the Commissioner of furnishing employees with board,  
35 lodging, or other facilities. For the purposes of G.S. 95-25.6 through  
36 G.S. 95-25.13 "wage" includes sick pay, vacation pay, severance pay,  
37 commissions, bonuses, and other amounts promised when the employer has a  
38 policy or a practice of making such payments.
- 39 (16a) Willful. – The employer knew or showed reckless disregard for the issue of  
40 whether the employer's conduct was prohibited by the act.
- 41 (17) ~~"Workweek" means any~~ Workweek. – Any period of 168 consecutive hours.
- 42 (18) ~~"Enterprise" means the related activities performed either through unified~~  
43 ~~operations or common control by any person or persons for a common~~  
44 ~~business purpose and includes all such activities whether performed in one or~~  
45 ~~more establishments or by one or more corporate units but shall not include~~  
46 ~~the related activities performed for such enterprise by an independent~~  
47 ~~contractor or franchisee."~~

48 **SECTION 1.(b)** G.S. 95-25.13 reads as rewritten:

49 **"§ 95-25.13. Notification, posting, and records.**

50 Every employer shall:

- 1 (1) Notify its ~~employees, orally or~~ employees in writing at the time of hiring, and  
2 upon any material change, of the following information:  
3 a. The promised wages and the day wages and the basis upon which the  
4 promised wages will be calculated (for example, per hour or per piece).  
5 b. The method, day, and place for ~~payment;~~ payment.  
6 c. The full name, mailing address, and telephone number of the employer  
7 and the federal and State tax identification number of each employer  
8 who is not a natural person.  
9 d. The employment status of the employee. Such notification or  
10 classification by the employer shall not be determinative of the  
11 employee's actual employment status.  
12 (2) Make available to its employees, in writing or through a posted notice  
13 maintained in a place accessible to its employees, employment practices and  
14 policies with regard to promised wages;  
15 (3) Notify employees, in writing or through a posted notice maintained in a place  
16 accessible to its employees, at least 24 hours prior to any changes in promised  
17 wages. Wages may be retroactively increased without the prior notice required  
18 by this subsection; and  
19 (4) Furnish each employee with an itemized statement of deductions made from  
20 that employee's wages under G.S. 95-25.8 and with the information required  
21 by 13 NCAC 12 .0801(6) and 13 NCAC 12 .0801(8) through (13) for each  
22 pay period such deductions are made period."

23 **SECTION.1.(c)** G.S. 95-25.22 reads as rewritten:

24 **"§ 95-25.22. Recovery of unpaid wages.**

25 (a) Any employer who violates the provisions of G.S. 95-25.3 (Minimum Wage),  
26 G.S. 95-25.4 (Overtime), or G.S. 95-25.6 through 95-25.12 (Wage Payment) shall be liable to  
27 the employee or employees affected in the amount of their unpaid minimum wages, their unpaid  
28 overtime compensation, or their unpaid amounts due under G.S. 95-25.6 through G.S. 95-25.12,  
29 as the case may be, plus interest at the legal rate set forth in G.S. 24-1, from the date each amount  
30 first came due.

31 (a1) In addition to the amounts awarded pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, the court  
32 shall award liquidated damages in an amount equal to twice the amount found to be due as  
33 provided in subsection (a) of this section, provided that if the employer shows to the satisfaction  
34 of the court that the act or omission constituting the violation was in good faith and that the  
35 employer had reasonable grounds for believing that the act or omission was not a violation of  
36 this Article, the court may, in its discretion, award no liquidated damages or may award any  
37 amount of liquidated damages not exceeding twice the amount found due as provided in  
38 subsection (a) of this section.

39 (a2) Any employer who violates the provisions of G.S. 95-25.13 or any rule adopted under  
40 that section shall be liable to the employee or employees affected in the amount of their actual  
41 damages, including, but not limited to, lost wages and benefits plus interest.

42 (a3) In addition to the amounts awarded pursuant to subsections (a), (a1), and (a2) of this  
43 section, if the court finds that the employer has intentionally violated any provision of this Article  
44 or any regulation issued pursuant to this Article, the court shall award statutory damages of up to  
45 five hundred dollars (\$500.00) per employee per violation. Factors to be considered in setting the  
46 amount of statutory damages include the nature and persistence of the violations and the extent  
47 of the employer's culpability.

48 (b) Action to recover such liability may be maintained in the General Court of Justice by  
49 any one or more employees.

50 (c) Action to recover such liability may also be maintained in the General Court of Justice  
51 by the Commissioner at the request of the employees affected. Any sums thus recovered by the

1 Commissioner on behalf of an employee shall be held in a special deposit account and shall be  
2 paid directly to the employee or employees affected.

3 (d) The court, in any action brought under this Article ~~may, shall,~~ in addition to any  
4 judgment awarded plaintiff, order costs and fees of the action and reasonable attorneys' fees to  
5 be paid by the defendant. In an action brought by the Commissioner in which a default judgment  
6 is entered, the clerk shall order attorneys' fees of three hundred dollars (\$300.00) to be paid by  
7 the defendant.

8 The court may order costs and fees of the action and reasonable attorneys' fees to be paid by  
9 the plaintiff if the court determines that the action was frivolous.

10 (e) The Commissioner is authorized to determine and supervise the payment of the  
11 amounts due under this section, including interest at the legal rate set forth in G.S. 24-1, from the  
12 date each amount first came due, and the agreement to accept such amounts by the employee  
13 shall constitute a waiver of the employee's right to bring an action under subsection (b) of this  
14 section.

15 (f) Actions under this section must be brought within two years pursuant to  
16 ~~G.S. 1-53~~ G.S. 1-53, except that an action arising out of a willful violation may be brought within  
17 three years. Actions may also be brought within one year after notification to the employee of  
18 final disposition by the State of a complaint for the same violation.

19 (g) Prior to initiating any action under this section, the Commissioner shall exhaust all  
20 administrative remedies, including giving the employer the opportunity to be heard on the matters  
21 at issue and giving the employer notice of the pending action."

22 **SECTION 1.(d)** G.S. 95-25.23 reads as rewritten:

23 "**§ 95-25.23. Violation of provisions on minimum wage, overtime, wage payment,**  
24 **withholding of wages, notification, and youth employment; civil penalty.**

25 (a) Any employer who violates the provisions of G.S. 95-25.3 (Minimum Wage),  
26 G.S. 95-25.4 (Overtime), G.S. 95-25.5 (Youth Employment)-Employment), G.S. 95-25.6 (Wage  
27 Payment), or G.S. 95-25.13 (Notification), or any regulation issued thereunder, shall be subject  
28 to a civil penalty not to exceed five hundred dollars (\$500.00) for the first violation and not to  
29 exceed one thousand dollars (\$1,000) for each subsequent violation. In determining the amount  
30 of such penalty, the appropriateness of such penalty to the size of the business of the person  
31 charged and the gravity of the violation shall be considered. The determination by the  
32 Commissioner shall be final, unless within 15 days after receipt of notice thereof by certified  
33 mail with return receipt, by signature confirmation as provided by the U.S. Postal Service, by a  
34 designated delivery service authorized pursuant to 26 U.S.C. § 7502(f)(2) with delivery receipt,  
35 or via hand delivery, the person charged with the violation takes exception to the determination,  
36 in which event final determination of the penalty shall be made in an administrative proceeding  
37 pursuant to Article 3 of Chapter 150B and in a judicial proceeding pursuant to Article 4 of  
38 Chapter 150B.

39 (b) The amount of such penalty when finally determined may be recovered in the manner  
40 set forth in G.S. 95-25.23B.

41 (c) The clear proceeds of civil penalties provided for in this section shall be remitted to  
42 the Civil Penalty and Forfeiture Fund in accordance with G.S. 115C-457.2.

43 (d) Assessment of penalties under this section shall be subject to a ~~two-year~~ three-year  
44 statute of limitations commencing at the time of the occurrence of the violation."

45 **SECTION 1.(e)** Article 2A of Chapter 95 of the General Statutes is amended by  
46 adding a new section to read:

47 "**§ 95-25.23D. Wage claims; liens; collections.**

48 (a) For the purposes of wage claims and collections under this Article, an employee is  
49 entitled to a lien upon:

50 (1) All property of the employer, real or personal, located in this State.

1           (2) All property upon which the employee has performed work at the instance of  
2           the owner or of any person acting by the employer's authority or under him or  
3           her as contractor or otherwise for the full amount of the wages and any  
4           statutory penalties owed.

5           (b) Both a wage claim and an action to enforce a lien under this section may be brought  
6           by the employee individually or by the Commissioner or any representative of the employee on  
7           behalf of the employee, including collective bargaining representatives.

8           (c) If no lien has been recorded at the time the employee files his or her complaint with  
9           the Commissioner, the Commissioner shall record and provide notice of the lien on behalf of the  
10           employee.

11           (d) Any number of wage claims or wage deficiencies against the same employer may be  
12           joined in a single proceeding, but the court may order separate trials or hearings. If the proceeds  
13           of the sale of the property subject to a lien are insufficient to pay all of the claimants, whether or  
14           not such claims have been joined together, the court shall order the claimants to be paid in  
15           proportion to the amount due each claimant.

16           (e) An employee's lien upon personal property shall be limited to such property as can be  
17           made subject to a security interest under the Commercial Code by the filing of a financing  
18           statement.

19           (f) In order to enforce a lien under this section upon real property, a claim of lien must  
20           be recorded with the county recorder in the county where the property is located, as follows:

21           (1) The claim shall include all of the applicable information set forth under  
22           G.S. 44A-12.

23           (2) The notice of lien shall be served on the property owner in the manner  
24           prescribed by G.S. 44A-11.

25           A lien under this section is perfected as soon as notice is provided as required by this  
26           subsection.

27           (g) In order to enforce a lien under this section upon personal property, the  
28           Commissioner, employee representative, or employee shall file the notice of the lien in the office  
29           of the Secretary of State and serve a copy of the notice by personal service to the employer in the  
30           same manner as a summons, or by mail. The office of the Secretary of State shall place the notice  
31           of the lien in the same file as the financing statements pursuant to G.S. 25-9-310. The notice shall  
32           specify the nature and amount of the claim, describe the property on which the lien is made, and  
33           state that the person filing the notice claims a lien on that property.

34           (h) The lien may be filed at any time prior to the expiration of the statute of limitations  
35           for a wage claim on the same wages pursuant to G.S. 95-25.22(f).

36           (i) Mistakes or errors in the claimed amount owed shall not invalidate the lien unless  
37           made with the intent to defraud.

38           (j) If a lien is recorded pursuant to subsection (f) of this section and an action to recover  
39           unpaid wages has been filed, then that action shall also be deemed an action to foreclose upon  
40           any property subject to the recorded lien. In the judgment resulting from such an action, the court  
41           may order the sale at sheriff's auction or the transfer to the plaintiff of title or possession of any  
42           property subject to the lien. Whether or not the court makes such an order as part of the judgment,  
43           a writ of sale may be issued for any property subject to the lien at any point after a judgment for  
44           unpaid wages is issued.

45           (k) If judgment is entered in favor of the employer in an action for unpaid wages or if the  
46           case is dismissed with prejudice, the lien shall be extinguished upon expiration of the applicable  
47           appeals period if no appeal is filed. If an appeal is filed, the lien shall continue in force until all  
48           issues on appeal have been decided.

49           (l) If an action to recover the wages is not brought within one year of the filing of the  
50           lien, the lien created by this section shall be extinguished.

1        (m) A lien recorded pursuant to subsection (f) of this section takes precedence over all  
2 other debts, judgments, decrees, liens, or mortgages against the employer, regardless as to  
3 whether these debts, judgments, decrees, liens, or mortgages originate before or after the wage  
4 lien, and regardless of whether these debts, judgments, decrees, liens, or mortgages were  
5 perfected prior to the wage lien. An employee's lien is effective against the employer, the estate  
6 of the employer, or a subsequent bona fide purchaser of the property subject to the employee's  
7 lien.

8        (n) The employee, the Commissioner, or the employee's representative, as assignee of the  
9 employee, is entitled to court costs and reasonable attorneys' fees for filing a successful action to  
10 foreclose a lien pursuant to this section."

11                **SECTION 2.** This act is effective when it becomes law and applies to employers and  
12 employees on or after that date.