



For immediate release:

Thursday, October 12, 2023

Workers sue Chinese restaurant 'Sichuan Taste' for more than \$230,000 over wage theft and retaliation

"We worked hard to make ends meet...Because of the employer's actions, we could not move on with our lives."

MALDEN, MA — Today, three former employees of Sichuan Taste filed a lawsuit against the restaurant for wage theft and retaliation in the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts. The suit alleges the restaurant flagrantly violated federal and state wage and hour laws by 1) failing to pay workers minimum wages and overtime, 2) failing to pay wages during their last several weeks of employment, and 3) illegally distributing funds from the workers' tip pool to a manager.

The workers are represented by the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF) and the Asian Outreach Center (AOC) at Greater Boston Legal Services. They are seeking more than \$230,000 in unpaid wages, overtime pay, stolen tips, and damages.

"Wage and hour laws exist to protect workers from exploitative conditions. Employers must abide by the law and pay their employees their lawful wages," said **Elizabeth Koo, Senior Counsel at AALDEF**. "Every worker is entitled to have their wages paid in full for work performed — regardless of immigration status."

"We dedicated extensive hours to the restaurant. I worked hard, so I could raise my child, provide for my family in China, and support my father who is terminally ill and needed hundreds of dollars just for a single dose of medicine. I need to get my wages back," said **Mr. Zhang, a litigant in the case** who prefers to be referred to by a pseudonym. Mr. Zhang is a middle-aged immigrant from China who is fearful of retaliation for speaking out about this situation.

The former employees worked at Sichuan Taste in janitorial, dishwashing, kitchen, delivery, host, and wait staff positions, at various times between April 2020 and October 2022, when the restaurant abruptly shut down. The Sichuan Taste manager retaliated and threatened workers who tried to organize and demand their wages.

"When Sichuan Taste failed to pay us, I felt stressed like the other workers. We worked hard to make ends meet, and we needed our money to sustain ourselves. Because of the employer's actions, we could not move on with our lives. We are grateful to have reached out to the

Chinese Progressive Association-Boston to learn about our rights and how we can get our wages back," said **Yuan Li, a 21-year-old immigrant from China and a litigant in the case against her former employer, Sichuan Taste.**

"Paying workers their minimum wages and overtime pay is the bare minimum. All three employees put their sweat and labor into Sichuan Taste, and they deserve fair pay for their hard work," said **Janet Vo, Director of the Asian Outreach Center at Greater Boston Legal Services.** "We are committed to representing these workers to secure their stolen wages, and we encourage all workers who are suffering from wage theft and exploitative working conditions to come forward and assert their rights."

Malden is a city in the greater Boston area with one of the highest growths of Asian Americans in New England. As of the 2020 Census, over 25% of Malden residents are Asian American, many of whom are immigrants who speak languages other than English. Malden has emerged as a thriving hub for Asian American families and businesses.

###

The [Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund \(AALDEF\)](#), a national organization founded in 1974 protects and promotes the civil rights of Asian Americans. By combining litigation, advocacy, education, and organizing, AALDEF works with Asian American communities across the country to secure human rights for all. AALDEF focuses on critical issues affecting Asian Americans, including immigrant rights, voting rights and democracy, economic justice for workers, educational equity, housing and environmental justice, and the elimination of anti-Asian violence.

The [Asian Outreach Center \(AOC\) at Greater Boston Legal Services](#) provides guidance, referral services and free legal assistance to nearly 1,000 low-income Asian immigrants each year. AOC represents individuals and households in addressing their most basic needs, including workers' rights, housing displacement, language access, immigrant rights, deportation defense, and the support of survivors of interpersonal and anti-Asian violence. AOC collaborates with community-based groups to advocate for positive systemic changes and impactful advocacy throughout the region and state.

###

For additional information, contact:

Stuart J. Sia
AALDEF Communications Director
212.966.5932 x203
ssia@aaldef.org