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CPR Receives National Grant for \$47,200 to Support Push for Private Right of Action to Enforce Worker Safety Laws

Washington, DC — The Center for Progressive Reform is among nine recipients of a national grant by Clean Slate for Worker Power to advance labor law reform. The \$47,200 award will help CPR advocate for a private right of action that would allow workers to enforce Maryland health and safety laws and identify complementary policies that provide workers a more formal role in government-led enforcement, such as participation in inspections and enhanced whistleblower protections. Empowering workers to participate in and facilitate enforcement will lift up those most disadvantaged by Maryland’s industrial poultry industry and give them the tools needed to fight back.

The grants program is part of the visionary [Clean Slate for Worker Power project](#), based at Harvard Law School. It generated [two reports](#) in the past year with recommendations for how to empower working people to build an equitable economy and democracy, particularly for women workers, workers of color, and low-wage workers. CPR’s project will build on the Clean Slate recommendations to “give workers a formal role within government enforcement of labor standards,” and “facilitate enforcement by workers and their organizations outside of government enforcement agencies.”

“While our federal labor law has failed to fulfill its purpose to ensure workers have a voice on the job, there are exciting state and local activities that are advancing worker power and organizing. Clean Slate is looking forward to supporting and partnering with groups experimenting with innovative strategies. These groups can serve as models for the kind of federal labor law reform that Clean Slate envisions,” said Sharon Block, co-director of Clean Slate for Worker Power and executive director of Harvard Law School’s Labor and Worklife Program.

“Maryland’s poultry industry is plagued by abusive labor practices, environmental pollution, and economic and racial injustices,” said Katlyn Schmitt, Policy Analyst at Center for Progressive Reform. “The coronavirus pandemic is ravaging the industry, underscoring these long-standing challenges and the need for just and equitable solutions. Maryland is a relatively progressive state, presenting an opportunity for CPR to work in affected rural communities with diverse

partners to advance a key Clean Slate priority—promoting workers’ role in enforcing health and safety standards.”

“We’re deeply grateful to Clean Slate for Worker Power for their support of our work,” said Laurie Ristino, Interim Co-Executive Director of the Center for Progressive Reform. “Among the many hard lessons to be learned from the pandemic is that OSHA and many of the state agencies charged with protecting worker health are failing the nation’s workers, with deadly results. We need new policy approaches to make workplaces safe, including a private right of action for workers to empower them to force employers to live up to the law.”

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