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## LIUNA Announces Landmark Lawsuit Seeking More Than \$2 Million in Stolen Wages and Damages

*First lawsuit by a union under New Jersey's "up-the-chain" wage theft law aims to hold contractors and developers accountable for unpaid construction workers*

**JERSEY CITY, N.J.** — The Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA) today announced the filing of a landmark lawsuit seeking more than \$2 million in unpaid wages and liquidated damages on behalf of construction workers who helped build two major Jersey City developments but were never paid for weeks of their work. The lawsuit marks the first known action filed by a labor union under New Jersey's up-the-chain liability statute, a groundbreaking law designed to ensure that workers can recover wages even when their direct employer is unable or unwilling to pay.

The lawsuit was filed today in Superior Court by LIUNA Local 3 and Laborers' Eastern Region Organizing Fund (LEROF). It names general contractor **AJD Construction** and subcontractor **Concrete Rising** as sharing liability for unpaid wages for work performed on **Kushner Companies'** One Journal Square project and **Namdar Group's** 35 Cottage Street development.

According to findings by the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, more than 240 workers are owed more than **\$716,000 in unpaid wages**, not including statutory liquidated damages, penalties, and other remedies available under state law. Their direct employer later declared bankruptcy, leaving workers without a practical means of recovering what they earned. Under New Jersey's up-the-chain liability law, enacted to address precisely these situations, contractors and other responsible entities may now be held accountable.

"This case is about a simple principle: if you work, you deserve to be paid," said **Mike Travostino, spokesperson for LIUNA Local 3**. "New Jersey made a promise to construction workers when it enacted the up-the-chain liability law. Today, we are asking the courts to ensure that promise has real meaning. No worker should lose weeks or months of wages simply because a subcontractor disappears into the night while others in the contracting chain continue to profit."

Travostino said the lawsuit represents an important test of the Legislature's intent to eliminate loopholes that have long enabled wage theft in the construction industry.

"For too long, responsibility has been pushed down the contracting chain while accountability has been pushed away," said **Mike Hellstrom, Vice President and Eastern Regional Manager of LIUNA**. "This law changes that. Companies that benefit from construction projects should not be able to wash their hands when workers are left unpaid."

LIUNA Local 3 Business Manager **Paul Roldan-Eng** said the case sends a clear message that wage theft will no longer be viewed as simply the cost of doing business.

"Construction workers build our skylines, our infrastructure and our communities. They should never have to fight just to receive the wages they have already earned. This lawsuit is about restoring dignity to honest work and making sure every company in the contracting chain understands that paying workers is not optional."

**"Raul"** (a pseudonym to protect his safety) was employed at the Kushner One Journal Square project employed by GP Concrete and is owed more than \$4,500 in wages for work he performed. "The work was very hard, and the foremen were always pushing us to work faster, often without breaks. We felt like they didn't see us as people," said Raul. "Then, in the summer of 2024, they stopped paying us. One week went by, then another, and we still had not received our checks. Things became very difficult at home. I had to worry about paying the rent and making sure my family had enough food. Now, two years later, we continue to fight."

Attorneys representing the unions said the lawsuit could establish an important precedent for enforcement of New Jersey's wage protection laws.

"Today's lawsuit is, to our knowledge, the first of its kind brought by a labor union under the Up-the-Chain Liability Statute, which was amended in early 2024 to allow unions to enforce its protections on behalf of construction workers—including for those not already part of a union," said **Hugh Baran, a partner at the law firm of Katz Banks Kumin**. "Our firm is proud to represent Laborers Local 3 in this important case to hold AJD and Concrete Rising accountable for this wage theft."

LEROF General Counsel **Julie R. Ulmet** explained why LIUNA Local 3 and LEROF filed the lawsuit. "The [New Jersey legislature recognized](#) that unions can play an important role in enforcing wage theft laws on behalf of both members and non-members. As the first union to file suit under this law, we want to send a message to the hard-working construction workers in Jersey City: we will stand beside you in your fight for dignity, respect, and the wages that are rightfully yours. To any contractor who exploits workers, know that we will go wherever the fight takes us, including to the courthouse."

Jersey City Mayor **James Solomon**, who joined LIUNA leaders for the announcement, praised workers who came forward.

"Jersey City's progress must not be built on the backs of exploited workers. When employers hide behind complex layers of labor brokers to steal wages, they aren't just robbing vulnerable people—they are evading their fair share of taxes and cheating our entire community. We will no longer tolerate this 'Wild West' environment in our local construction industry. As Mayor, I intend to ensure strict compliance with our payroll taxes to hold these developers accountable. Anyone who helps build our city must receive fair pay, safe conditions, and basic human dignity."

Hudson County Executive **Craig Guy** said protecting workers ultimately benefits the entire construction industry.

"In Hudson County, we proudly stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the hardworking men and women that build our communities. I commend LIUNA for championing these workers and taking on this unprecedented challenge. Let this litigation serve as a clear warning to unscrupulous players in the construction industry: we will never tolerate the exploitation of vulnerable workers or the theft of hard-earned wages."

LIUNA's Hellstrom emphasized that this issue is bigger than a single legal filing. "This case is about ensuring that New Jersey's construction industry rewards responsible businesses while protecting the men and women whose labor makes every project possible," Hellstrom said. "When workers know they will be paid fairly, responsible contractors can compete on a level playing field, and communities benefit from an industry built on integrity."

Jersey City Council members Denise Ridley, Eleana Little, Rolando Lavarro, and Jake Ephos all offered statements of support for LIUNA and the affected workers.

"When the City Council and Redevelopment Agency approve major projects, our goal is equitable growth—not exploitation. We cannot allow developers and contractors to profit from our city's growth while robbing the hardworking people building it of their wages and basic dignity. I expect developers seeking our approval to prioritize high-quality, family-sustaining careers for local residents. I applaud the Department of Labor and LIUNA for pursuing justice for these workers and making it absolutely clear that wage theft will never be tolerated in Jersey City." - **Denise Ridley, Council President**

"Wage theft is a crime. These workers deserve to be paid every dollar they are owed. Hundreds of laborers had more than \$700,000 stolen from them, including payment for work done right here in Jersey City. Developers have to take responsibility for what happens on their job sites. I stand with LIUNA and their members in demanding accountability, justice, and full repayment. If you want to build in Jersey City, you must respect the workers who make it possible." - **Eleana Little, Ward E Jersey City Councilperson**

"You cannot owe nearly three-quarters of a million dollars in unpaid wages and associated payroll taxes and expect the Jersey City government to continue greenlighting new projects. We just had a budgetary reckoning that forced everyone to make painful decisions about our shared priorities, and, at minimum, we must ensure that development helps fund critical infrastructure, like our city schools, rather than simply lining the pockets of billionaire developers." - **Rolando Lavarro, Jersey City Councilperson At-Large**

“Developers like Namdar and Kushner Companies are not just exploiting workers here in Jersey City, their contractors are stealing workers' wages. It's time to pay up. I stand in solidarity with LIUNA and these workers and wish them the best as they seek justice in the courts.” - **Jake Ephros, Ward D Jersey City Councilperson**

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***About LIUNA/LIUNA Local 3/LEROF***

*The Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA) represents more than 20,000 construction workers throughout New Jersey. LIUNA members build roads, bridges, schools, utilities, commercial buildings and critical infrastructure while advocating for safe jobsites, fair wages and strong communities.*

*Building and Construction Laborers Local 3 serves close to 3,000 skilled tradeworkers in Northern New Jersey. Through its industry-leading apprenticeship and training programs, and innovative labor-management funds, Local 3 provides the skilled, safe, and productive workforce that builds both successful projects and careers.*

*The Laborers Eastern Region Organizing Fund (LEROF) is a 40,000 force of union activism and worker empowerment. Through its RISE member education program, LEROF helps members become more knowledgeable and effective union activists able to affect change for themselves and their union brothers and sisters.*