



Women's Economic Security Act (WESA) 2025 annual report

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Presentation topics

- Background and enforcement authority
- WESA provisions enforced by the Department of Labor and Industry (DLI)
- Innovations in enforcement and outreach
- 2025 report overview
- Complaint data and trends



Women's Economic Security Act (WESA)

- WESA was passed in 2014 and revised in 2022, 2023 and 2024. It is designed as a comprehensive worker protection law and aims to improve women's economic security. It includes four workplace protections enforced by DLI:
 - Wage disclosure protection (M.S. 181.172);
 - Pregnancy accommodations (M.S. 181.939);
 - Pregnancy and parenting leave (M.S. 181.941); and
 - Nursing mothers and lactating employees (M.S. 181.939).



DLI enforcement authority

- DLI has the authority to investigate complaints, issue compliance orders including reinstatement to employment, assess back wages, compensatory damages and liquidated damages to employees affected by a WESA-related violation.
- For complaints related to nursing mothers and pregnancy accommodations, DLI must contact the employer within two business days and investigate the complaint within 10 days of receipt of the complaint.

Innovations in WESA enforcement and outreach (1 of 3)

- Informal resolutions make up the largest sum of DLI's investigations of WESA related violations.
 - DLI is mandated to attempt informal resolution (M.S. 181.9435).
 - Educating employers about their legal obligations and asking for voluntary compliance has been a successful approach for DLI.
 - DLI's 2025 WESA report shows that DLI informally resolved 116 complaints out of a total of 123 complaints.

Innovations in WESA enforcement and outreach (2 of 3)

- Pre-enforcement demand letters:
 - are used to alert employers of violations identified during preliminary investigations;
 - detail the form and nature of potential violations as well as necessary corrective actions needed to achieve full compliance;
 - are issued in cases involving serious violations, particularly when employees appear to be willfully noncompliant or when violations result in substantial lost wages for pregnant employees; and
 - aim to speed up informal compliance and avoid protracted legal process.
- DLI issued a total of 19 pre-enforcement demand letters in the most recent reporting period.

Innovations in WESA enforcement and outreach (3 of 3)

- Targeted strategic outreach
 - Outreach specific to resident physicians
 - Collaboration with DLI grantees
 - Third-party administrators
 - Staffing agencies

DLI's 2025 WESA investigative summary: Intake data

September 2024 through August 2025

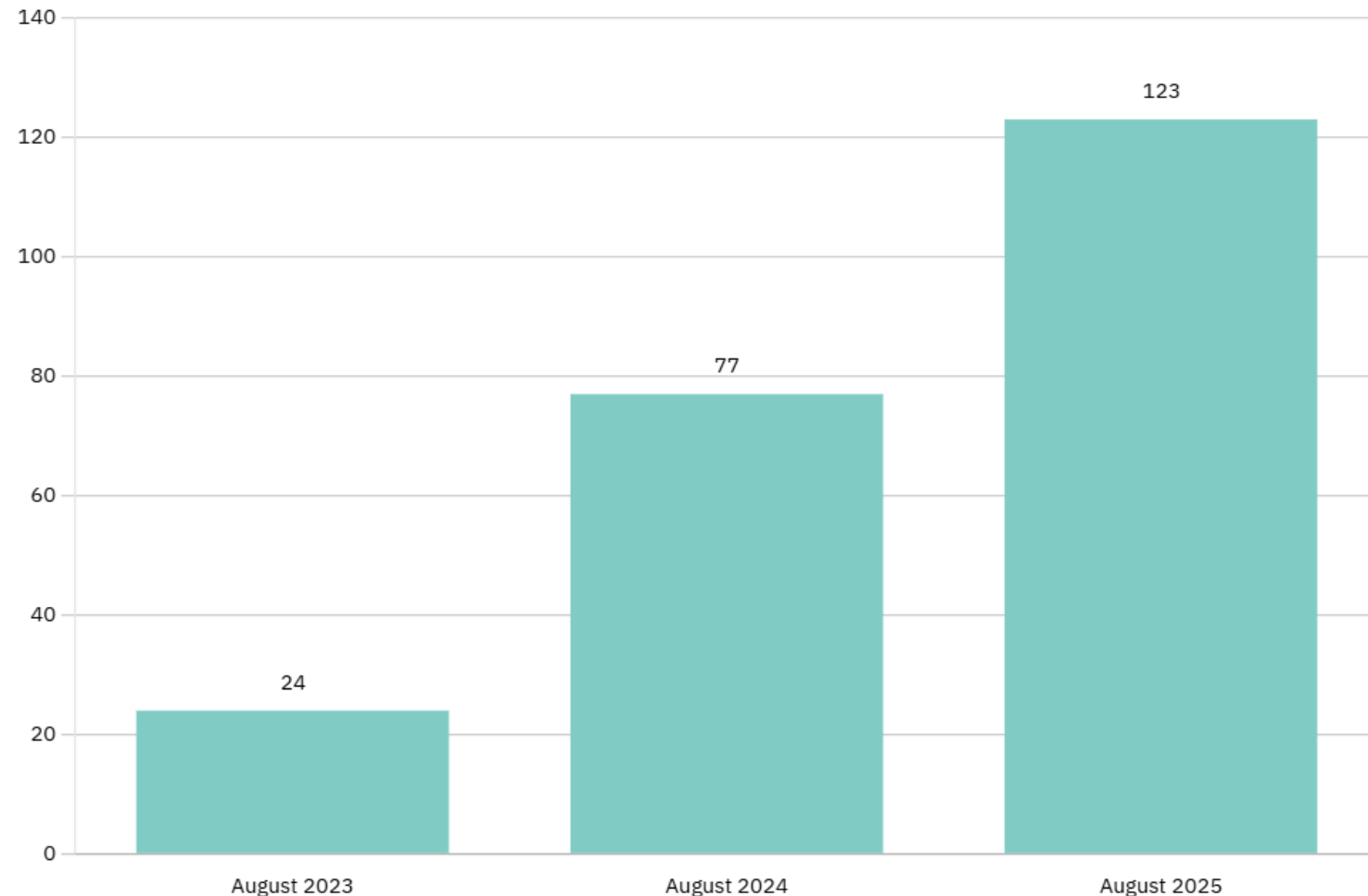
Topic of inquiry	Number of intakes
Wage disclosure protection	18
Pregnancy accommodations	146
Pregnancy and parenting leave	277
Nursing mothers	143
Retaliation	52
Employee notice	39
Total WESA intakes	675

DLI's 2025 WESA investigative summary: Complaint data

Complaint type	Complaints filed	Complaints closed	Violations found
Wage disclosure protection	1	1	1
Pregnancy accommodations	36	22	22
Pregnancy and parenting leave	28	22	22
Nursing mothers	25	20	20
Retaliation	21	19	19
Employee notice	12	34	34
Total	123	118	118

WESA investigative data: Three-year overview

- In the recent period ending in August 2025:
 - The number of WESA complaints rose to 123, which marks an increase of approximately 59.74%.
 - When compared to the period ending August 2023, which saw only 24 total complaints filed, this represents more than a **fivefold** increase or 412.5% rise in total complaints over a two-year period.



WESA investigative data: Three-year overview

- DLI was successful in informally resolving most complaints (94.3%) by educating employers about their legal obligations, resulting in voluntary corrective actions.
- DLI secured voluntary agreements from employers to pay a total of \$81,574.10 in back-wages, compensatory damages and liquidated damages to 21 affected employees.
- DLI issued a total of \$40K in civil penalties related to WESA and stayed a total of \$160K penalties pending compliance with the law.

Conclusion

- DLI continues to focus on education to both employees and employers about their rights and responsibilities under WESA.
- Informal resolution of complaints is the agency's primary enforcement tool and most employers willingly and expeditiously comply.
- Supporting pregnant and new parents in the workplace to protect their safety and economic security and helping employers comply with the law will continue to be DLI's goal.

Thank you