

CT DEPT. OF LABOR AND INDEPENDENCE AT HOME ISSUE BACK WAGES FOR LIVE-IN CAREGIVERS IMPACTED BY MEAL CREDIT PROGRAM

(Wethersfield, CT) – Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) Commissioner Danté Bartolomeo and Independence at Home have reached an agreement on meal credit deductions for Independence at Home caregivers who were impacted by improper practice. The agreement, reached after an audit by Independence at Home and the CTDOL Wage and Workplace Standards Division, returns \$478,765.00 in wages to 114 Independence at Home caregivers. Independence at Home caregivers provide a wide range of home services to clients including personal care, housekeeping, and other day-to-day needs.

Commissioner Bartolomeo said, “Live-in caregivers provide critical services to some of Connecticut’s most vulnerable residents and their families. Their work protects patients, keeps people out of nursing homes, and helps support family members who are caring for a loved one and working outside of the home. We recognize how valuable these caregivers are to our community and our economy; it’s clear that Independence at Home does too. We appreciate their partnership in reaching this settlement and quickly issuing back wages to the impacted workers.”

Independence at Home Vice President Lisa Connolly said, “Independence at Home’s live-in caregivers are incredibly valued and appreciated. In September of 2021, before the audit, Independence at Home chose to end the pay practice that allows employers to credit the value of meals provided to a live-in caregiver. We were proud to partner with the state Department of Labor to go above and beyond, reimbursing meal credits for the timeframe September 2019 until the practice ended. Independence at Home is pleased to have resolved this matter in complete cooperation with the Department of Labor.”

The meal credit practice at issue is a lawful and widely used program that allows employers to deduct wages for employee meals. Among other responsibilities under state and federal law, employers must notify employees of the deduction; receive permission from the Connecticut Department of Labor to engage in the practice for each participating employee; must keep itemized records of the meals; and must charge employees the actual cost of the meal.

An audit conducted by Independence at Home found improper practices that included employees who were charged \$17.50/day for meals rather than the actual cost; and instances of program enrollment that were outside of the permissions granted by CTDOL.

The settlement agreement provides \$478,765.00 in back wages to 114 employees, the full value of the deductions since 2019. The CTDOL Wage and Workplace Standards Division also levied a \$17,100.00 civil penalty on the employer for improper practices.

CTDOL Wage and Workplace Unit Director Thomas Wydra said, “From day one, Independence at Home was a proactive partner in addressing the meal credit program problems. They worked closely with our investigators to understand the scope of the violations, identify the impacted employees, and reimburse

the back wages. I applaud Independence at Home for their transparency and good faith in reaching this settlement quickly and to the benefit of their employees.

The Connecticut Department of Labor Wage and Workplace Standards Division investigates wage complaints and worker conditions including youth workers. The agency urges workers to report wage and work violations [here](#).

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