



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**The Advocates for Human Rights Welcomes Conviction in Labor Trafficking Case**

**Minneapolis / St. Paul, MN (November 19, 2019)** The Advocates for Human Rights welcomes the announcement of a guilty plea by Ricardo Ernesto Batres to felony labor trafficking and insurance fraud charges. Batres, who worked as a residential construction labor broker, pled guilty to labor trafficking in the form of debt bondage. Batres admitted to having forced his victim to work for him after he posted an immigration bond to get the victim out of immigration custody, even though Batres knew the bond amount would be returned to him at the end of the immigration proceedings. Batres also pled guilty to insurance fraud for having failed to disclose the fact that he had employees on his workers compensation insurance application. The case, one of the first brought under Minnesota's felony labor trafficking statute, sends an important message to industries that rely on business models prone to exploitation.

"This case is an important step toward addressing exploitation in Minnesota workplaces," said Robin Phillips, executive director of The Advocates for Human Rights. "Collaboration between the workers who had been victimized, trusted community organizations, and law enforcement proved essential to ensure criminal accountability in this case."

Trafficking occurs throughout Minnesota but is widely under-identified. Statewide labor trafficking protocol guidelines released earlier in 2019 provide a blueprint for building a comprehensive, coordinated response to help victims come forward and to help law enforcement and prosecutors hold traffickers accountable. Traffickers exploit vulnerable workers, compelling them to provide labor or services through a variety of means, including force, physical restraint, threats of deportation or arrest, blackmail, debt, or control of housing and other basic needs.

The Advocates for Human Rights works with state agencies, municipal governments, community organizations, and workers who have faced labor trafficking to craft policies that assist victims, hold perpetrators accountable, and dismantle practices that foster exploitation.

**For more information please contact:**

Robin Phillips  
Executive Director  
(612) 746-0859  
[rphillips@advrights.org](mailto:rphillips@advrights.org)

Sarah Brenes  
Director, Refugee and Immigrant Program  
(612) 746-4684  
[sbrenes@advrights.org](mailto:sbrenes@advrights.org)

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The Advocates for Human Rights, a nonprofit organization headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota, works to change systems and conditions that cause human rights abuses. We fight injustice, improve laws and lives throughout the world, and represent individual victims of human rights violations. The Advocates develops partnerships and mobilizes volunteers to address some of the most pressing issues of our time. We believe that everyone has the power and the responsibility to advance human rights. The Advocates has received international recognition for a broad range of innovative programs and holds Special Consultative Status with the United Nations. To learn more about The Advocates' local, national, and international work, visit [theadvocatesforhumanrights.org](http://theadvocatesforhumanrights.org).