- 2023

68th Legislature 2023 Drafter: Erin Sullivan, 406-444-3594 HB0490.001.001

1	HOUSE BILL NO. 490				
2	INTRODUCED BY S. GIST, M. MALONE, J. COHENOUR, S. ESSMANN, J. HINKLE, S. GALLOWAY, R.				
3	MARSHALL, R. MINER, B. PHALEN, L. DEMING				
4					
5	A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT REVISING LAWS RELATED TO INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR				
6	TAX EVASION AND FRAUD; CLARIFYING BUSINESS PRACTICES FOR HIRING AGENTS AND				
7	EMPLOYERS CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTORS WHO HIRE INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS; REVISION				
8	INSPECTIONS FOR CONSTRUCTION SITES; REVISING INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR VIOLATION				
9	PENALTIES; REQUIRING THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRY TO ORDER AN UNINSURED				
10	EMPLOYER TO CEASE OPERATIONS; AND AMENDING SECTIONS 39-9-301, 39-71-419, AND 39-71-507,				
11	AND 39-71-522, MCA."				
12					
13	BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:				
14					
15	Section 1. Section 39-9-301, MCA, is amended to read:				
16	"39-9-301. Business practices penalty. (1) Except as provided in 39-9-205, a person who has				
17	registered under one name as provided in this chapter may not engage in the business or act in the capacity of				
18	a construction contractor or a home inspector under any other name unless that name also is registered under				
19	this chapter.				
20	(2) Use of a falsified registration number in connection with a solicitation or identification as a				
21	construction contractor or a home inspector is prohibited.				
22	(3) A partner, associate, agent, salesperson, solicitor, officer, or employee of a construction				
23	contractor or a home inspector shall use a true name and address at all times while engaged in the business of				
24	capacity of a construction contractor or a home inspector or in activities related to a construction contractor or a				
25	home inspector.				
26	(4) A hiring agent or employer construction contractor may not:				
27	(a) hire an unregistered independent contractorhire a person as an independent contractor who				
28	does not have an independent contractor exemption certificate if required by 39-71-417;				



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1	<u>(b)</u>	hire an-a person as an independent contractor when-if the department has suspended,
2	revoked, or deni	ed the person's independent contractor's exemption certificate;
3	<u>(c)</u>	hire an independent contractor to work-outside the scope in a trade, business, occupation, or
4	profession not lis	sted on the independent contractor's registration;
5	<u>(d)</u>	allow an independent contractor to perform work outside the scope not in the trade, business,
6	occupation, or p	rofession listed on the independent contractor's registration contractor exemption certificate; or
7	<u>(e)</u>	misclassify an employee as an independent contractorclassify an employee as an independent
8	contractor if the	person does not have an independent contractor exemption certificate required by 39-71-417.
9	<del>(4)</del> (5)	(a) The finding of a violation of this section by the department at a hearing held in accordance
10	with the Montana	a Administrative Procedure Act subjects the person who commits the violation to a penalty of
11	not more than \$5	5,000, as determined by the department. The required hearing may be held by telephone or by
12	videoconference	e. A penalty collected under this section must be deposited in the state special revenue account
13	to the credit of th	ne department for administration and enforcement of this chapter.
14	(b)	Penalties under this section do not apply to a violation that is determined to be an inadvertent
15	error."	
16		
17	Section	2. Section 39-71-419, MCA, is amended to read:
18	"39-71-4	19. Independent contractor violations penalty. (1) A person may not:
19	(a)	perform work as an independent contractor without first:
20	(i)	obtaining from the department an independent contractor exemption certificate unless the
21	individual is not	required to obtain an independent contractor exemption certificate pursuant to 39-71-417(1)(a);
22	or	
23	(ii)	electing to be bound personally and individually by the provisions of compensation plan No. 1,
24	2, or 3;	
25	(b)	perform work as an independent contractor when the department has revoked suspended,
26	<u>revoked,</u> or deni	ed the independent contractor's exemption certificate;
27	(c)	transfer to another person or allow another person to use an independent contractor exemption
28	certificate that w	as not issued to that person;



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1 (	(d)	alter or falsify	/ an indeper	ndent contractor	exemption (	certificate; or

- (e) misrepresent the person's status as an independent contractor. A person who falsely claimed, either in writing or through credible evidence, to have an independent contractor certification may not be considered to be an employee solely based on not actually having an independent contractor exemption certificate. The burden of proof that an independent contractor is certified rests with the independent contractor and not the hiring entity.
- An employer may not: (2)
- 8 (a) require an employee through coercion, misrepresentation, or fraudulent means to adopt 9 independent contractor status to avoid the employer's obligations to provide workers' compensation coverage; 10 or
- 11 (b) exert control to a degree that causes the independent contractor to violate the provisions of 39-12 71-417(4).
  - (a) In addition to any other penalty or sanction provided in this chapter, a person or employer (3) who violates a provision of this section is subject to a fine to be assessed by the department of up to \$1,000 \$5,000 for each violation as follows:
  - \$1,000 for the first offense violation, of which \$1,000 may be waived if the person or employer completes a department-directed education program;
- 18 \$2,500 for the second-offense violation; (ii)
- \$5,000 for the third-offense violation; 19 (iii)
  - \$5,000 for the fourth and any each subsequent offense violation. In addition to the fine, the (iv) department shall suspend or revoke the person's-or-employer's license for up to 12 months independent contractor exemption certificate and report the person to the workers' compensation fraud investigation and prosecution office provided for in 2-15-2015.
  - (b) The department shall deposit the fines in the uninsured employers' fund. The lien provisions of 39-71-506 apply to any assessed fines.
  - (4) A person or employer who disputes a fine assessed by the department pursuant to this section may file an appeal with the department within 30 days of the date on which the fine was assessed. If, after mediation, the issue is not resolved, the issue must be transferred to the workers' compensation court for



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resolution."

- **Section 3.** Section 39-71-507, MCA, is amended to read:
  - "39-71-507. Department to order uninsured employer to cease operations -- noncompliance with order a misdemeanor -- coordination of remedies. (1) When the department discovers an uninsured employer, it shall order the employer to cease operations until the employer has elected to be bound by a compensation plan.
  - When the department discovers a person, business, or other entity functioning as a prime contractor that has subcontracted for the services of an uninsured employer, it may shall order the person, business, or other entity functioning as a prime contractor to cause all operations performed by the uninsured employer to cease at worksites controlled by the prime contractor until the uninsured employer has elected to be bound by a compensation plan. If after 3 business days following the order by the department the person, business, or other entity functioning as a prime contractor has not complied with the order, the department may order the prime contractor to cease all operations at the affected worksites.
  - (3) An employer who does not comply with the department's order to cease operations is guilty of a misdemeanor. Each day of violation is a separate offense. The county attorney may prosecute a criminal action under this subsection in the county in which the violation occurs. Prosecution under this subsection does not bar the department from enforcing its order by a civil action.
  - (4) A person, business, or other entity functioning as a prime contractor that does not comply with the department's order to cease all operations is guilty of a misdemeanor. Each day of violation is a separate offense. The county attorney may prosecute a criminal action under this subsection in the county in which the violation occurs. Prosecution under this subsection does not bar the department from enforcing its order by a civil action. In addition, the department may assess a penalty against the person, business, or other entity functioning as a prime contractor of not more than \$1,000 per day for each day of violation.
  - (5) The department may institute and maintain in the name of the state, through the attorney general or the county attorney of the county in which the violation occurs, an action for an injunction order or other civil remedy in district court to enforce its order to cease operations.
    - (6) The remedies provided in 39-71-506 and subsections (3) through (5) of this section are not



mutually exclusive and may be pursued concurrently."

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2 3 Section 4. Section 39-71-522, MCA, is amended to read: "39-71-522. Inspection of construction sites -- public policy -- penalty. (1) In recognition of the 4 5 benefit of fair competition among business competitors and the public policy of this state providing for 6 enforcement of workers' compensation insurance coverage requirements, the legislature finds that it is reasonable to allow access by authorized employees of the department onto construction sites for the purpose 7 8 of determining whether workers are appropriately covered by workers' compensation insurance or a valid 9 exemption from insurance coverage. 10 (2) In order to determine if proper workers' compensation insurance coverage is in place or if a 11 valid exemption is held by a worker present on a construction site, authorized employees of the department 12 may enter onto any construction site for which a construction permit is required or has been issued. 13 Upon presentation of proper credentials, department employees must be admitted to a 14 construction site to: gather information relating to compliance with the coverage requirements of this chapter; and 15 16 when appropriate, issue a notice of violation to a person who is in violation of 39-71-419. 17 (4) A worker providing labor or services for remuneration shall be considered an employee rather 18 than an independent contractor unless the hiring entity demonstrates that all of the following conditions are 19 satisfied: 20 the worker is free from the control and direction of the hiring entity in connection with the performance of work, both under the contract for the performance of the work and in fact; 21 22 the person performs work that is outside the usual course of the hiring entity's business; and 23 the worker is customarily engaged in an independently established trade, occupation, or 24 business of the same nature of the work performed. 25 (4)(5) This section does not authorize the department's employees to engage in a breach of the 26 peace. The department may request the assistance of appropriate local law enforcement agencies to peaceably enter a construction site. 27 28 (5)(6) A person who purposely or knowingly restricts the access to a construction site by a



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1	credentialed department employee or who obstructs the employee in the performance of the employee's duties
2	under this section commits the offense of obstruction of a public servant as provided in 45-7-302.
3	(6)(7) As used in this section, the following definitions apply:
4	(a) "Construction permit" means any permit that can be issued pursuant to Title 50, chapter 60,
5	and includes:
6	(i) a boiler permit;
7	(ii) a building permit;
8	(iii) an electrical permit;
9	(iv) an elevator permit;
10	(v) a mechanical permit; or
11	(vi) a plumbing permit.
12	(b) "Construction site" means any parcel of real property where work is being performed for which
13	a construction permit is required or has been issued."
1/	END

