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PRESS RELEASE

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Attorney General Brown Announces Sentencing of Construction Company Owner to Jail for Wage Theft from Workers

Owner Ordered to Pay Nearly \$300,000 in Restitution to Impacted Workers; AG Issues Call to Affected Workers to Come Forward

BALTIMORE, MD (September 30, 2024) - Attorney General Anthony G. Brown announced today that Jose Walter Marquez Rivera, 43, of Beltsville, Maryland, was sentenced in the Circuit Court for Prince George's County on one count of theft scheme having a value of \$100,000 or more. Judge Darren S. Johnson sentenced Marquez to 90 days in jail, to be followed by five years of supervised probation. Marquez will also be required to pay \$291,333.07 in restitution.

Marquez is the owner of Congratulations Construction Inc., a construction company headquartered in Prince George's County, Maryland. Congratulations provided drywall carpenters and laborers on two construction projects in Prince George's County: University of Maryland Capital Region Cancer Center and the University of Maryland Field Hockey and Women's Lacrosse Complex. On these projects, employers were required to pay their workers the prevailing wage determined by the Commissioner of Labor and Industry and to submit certified payroll demonstrating that they had done so.

An investigation by the Office of the Attorney General revealed that, although certified payroll records submitted to the state claimed that the workers had been paid the prevailing wage, these claims were false. Instead, using varying methods, including employing false payroll names, Marquez took the money that was due to the workers, and then paid them at a substantially lower rate than required by law and certified to the state.

"Hardworking Marylanders deserve to be paid what they are owed. We will not allow unscrupulous employers to take from their employees' wallets and depreciate their wages," **said Attorney General Brown**. "This sentencing shows that our office will vigorously defend residents' right to a fair paycheck."

The Office of the Attorney General and the Maryland Office of the Comptroller lead the Joint Enforcement Task Force on Workplace Fraud, which works alongside the Department of Labor and other state agencies to investigate reports of workplace fraud and wage theft.

“I appreciate Attorney General Brown and his team for taking workplace fraud seriously and prosecuting this case, and cases like it, to the fullest extent of the law,” **Comptroller Lierman said**. “The Office of the Comptroller is committed to working with our partners both inside and outside of government to aggressively pursue wage theft cases and retrieve the resources that both our state government and residents are owed so that our workers and communities can reach their full potential.”

Attorney General Brown invites any worker who worked for Congratulations Construction Inc. on the University of Maryland Capital Region Cancer Center or the University of Maryland Field Hockey and Women’s Lacrosse Complex to contact the Office of the Attorney General at restitution@oag.state.md.us regarding restitution to which they may be entitled as a result of this case.

In making today’s announcement, Attorney General Brown thanked the Criminal Division and Fraud and Corruption Unit Chief Alexander Huggins, who prosecuted this case. Attorney General Brown also thanked Investigative Auditor Harry Schulz and the Maryland State Police for their assistance with this investigation and Comptroller Brooke E. Lierman for her partnership in combating workplace fraud. Finally, Attorney General Brown thanked State’s Attorney for Prince George’s County Aisha Braveboy for her assistance in this prosecution.

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