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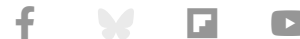


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Lawsuit filed against Hyundai and Kia over alleged "severe labor exploitation"

Hyundai called the allegations in the lawsuit filed by Jobs to Move America "baseless" in a Thursday statement.

By **CHANCE PHILLIPS**

• Published on November 14, 2025 at 7:43 am CST





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On Thursday, the progressive pro-worker nonprofit Jobs to Move America filed a lawsuit against Hyundai and Kia in a California state court. The suit revolves around allegations of child labor and prison labor in the companies' supply chains, claiming that the companies violated California law by falsely certifying their products had not been made "produced in whole or in part" with sweatshop labor.

"Hyundai and Kia—two of the world's largest automakers—market themselves as socially and ethically responsible corporations, yet they oversee and control a network of auto parts suppliers in the United States that has engaged in severe labor exploitation, including child,



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forced, and prison labor, in plants with deadly working conditions resulting in widespread violations of health and safety standards," the introduction to the complaint reads.

During a press conference on Thursday, Brian Olney, an attorney on Jobs to Move America's legal team for the case, said "Hyundai uses children to build its vehicles who aren't even old enough to drive cars themselves."

A Reuters investigation first drew national attention to children working at Hyundai suppliers in Alabama in 2022. The U.S. Department of Labor later filed a formal complaint against Hyundai in 2024. The company has repeatedly contested these claims in court and in public statements, and repeatedly stated that it should not be unfairly held accountable for the actions of its suppliers.



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“[Hyundai commits] rampant health and safety violations that resulted in amputations and even deaths,” Olney went on to state. “Hyundai relies on prison, labor, forced labor, and even human trafficking. And these are just a few of the problems that we’ve uncovered. Hyundai knows about all these practices. Hyundai has the power and the control to stop all these practices. But instead of stopping them, Hyundai chose to hide them by falsely certifying to public agencies that its vehicles are manufactured in accordance with state and federal laws.”

“These allegations are baseless,” a Hyundai spokesperson said in a statement emailed to **APR**. “We prioritize the safety and well-being

of our workforce above all else and remain fully compliant with all federal and state regulations. We require our suppliers and business partners to adhere to Hyundai's strict safety, employment, and legal standards, and take decisive action when violations occur."

The statement also describes Hyundai as a "driver of American growth and innovation," highlighting the company's effects on the local economies of the states relevant to the filed complaint. "In Alabama, we employ 4,500 people directly and support an additional 18,000 jobs, generating more than \$2.4 billion in private disposable income each year," one such part states.



Last week, a team of economists associated with the Columbia Labor Lab released a report based on surveys administered by Jobs to Move America employees which suggested that Hyundai and Kia suppliers utilizing more labor from work release programs depressed wages.

During a press conference announcing that report, as well as the Thursday press conference discussing the new lawsuit, former participant in a work-release program at Hyundai supplier Ju-Young Manufacturing America Mark