

Chair Tomei, Distinguished Committee

Members:

My name is Alberto Moreno. I am the Executive Director for the Oregon Latino Health Coalition, President of the Board for the Oregon Farmworker Ministries, a commissioner on the Governors Commission for Hispanic Affairs and the former Migrant Health Coordinator for the State of Oregon.

In my role as the Migrant Health Coordinator, my office commissioned the Oregon Enumeration Study which tells us that there are 176,000 Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers and Children in Oregon.

That these workers contribute over 5 billion in annual agricultural economic activity to our great state.

And yet, this highly productive workforce, does not enjoy the same protections under the law. Migrant Children for example, have a 25 percent higher mortality rate, which means in the simple and unadorned vernacular of our lives, that 25 percent more of our children, are dying simply because of the color of their skin. Additionally, farmworkers are among the most disadvantaged, medically indigent persons and have the poorest health of any group.

Commonly reported health problems among farmworkers and their children include: lower height and weight, higher rates of respiratory disease, parasitic conditions, skin infections, chronic diarrhea, vitamin A deficiency, accidental injury, heat related illness and chemical poisoning, to name just a few.

Because of unsafe and crowded housing conditions, farmworkers face tuberculosis rates which are six times higher than the general population.

In view of these cumulative health burdens, it is appropriate for us to ask what is the cost of these health inequities on a human frame?

That is, what is the cost of these inequities on a human life?

The answer lies in the fact that the life expectancy for farmworkers is 49 years of age. Forty nine years compared to 73 years of life for you and me.

So What then is the human cost of these injustices?

24 years of a human life multiplied 176,000 fold across our great state of Oregon.

You may also be asking your self. In view of this lived reality, why do we come here?

We come here because we believe in the promise of this great state. A promise that is carved in the very walls of this state capital. The promise that Orgons resources shall be justly appportioned for all.

It is a promise, unabridged. The great stones into which it is carved are silent. Silent on color. On creed or even national origin.

We are here in this time in Oregon's history because we believe in this great state and its promise for equality for all.

We ask you that you support extending the farmworker tax credit to ensure this vital workforce has access to safe and dignified housing.

Thank you.