



Farmworkers and Latinx Families United

9/17/21

Chair Prusak, Vice Chairs Hayden and Salinas, members of the committee

On behalf of the 6,000+ members at PCUN, Oregon's Farmworker Union, I respectfully request your support for Cover All People, HB 2164-4 and HB 3352. Cover all people would provide healthcare coverage to medically underserved communities including undocumented adults, DACA recipients, legal permanent residents, and young adults who age out of Cover All Kids who are currently excluded from health coverage.

PCUN's fundamental goal is to empower farmworkers and low wage Latino workers to understand and take action against systematic exploitation and all of its effects. As a farmworker union, we strive to improve and protect the living and working conditions of our communities. Part of this mission includes ensuring that all farmworkers receive access to healthcare. When our communities have access to high quality healthcare, all of our communities are stronger.

Farmworkers are particularly vulnerable to many of the most serious health consequences because of the work they perform. They are exposed to wildfire smoke, do heavy, physically exerting work in hot temperatures, with high levels of physical and mental stress, and with pesticide exposure. These conditions are linked to many serious health impacts on farmworkers, ranging from heat exhaustion to kidney disease.¹ However, there are some farm workers that are not eligible for healthcare due to their immigration status. In fact, according to an Oregon Center for Public Policy Report, there are an approximate 74,000 essential workers that are undocumented, about 15K are farmworkers (OCPP).

In Oregon, there are about 87,000 farmworkers; about 20% are women according to national data. Of these farmworkers, about 40% are indigenous and speak almost only indigenous languages.² Here in the Mid-Willamette Valley, we hear languages ranging from Purepecha, to Mixteco and Mayan. Our farm workers work in an industry that ranks 5th for the production of 777, 000 tons of fresh market vegetables. They are essential workers who have continued to show up to work in a pandemic and wildfires. It's time we show up for our most vulnerable communities by ensuring they have access to high quality, affordable, healthcare.

The Health Care for All Oregon Children program has created a model for a more accessible and equitable healthcare system for youth. HB 2164 / HB 3352 builds on this model to extend coverage to adults. Now is the time to extend access for vulnerable Oregonians while also fully funding the Oregon Health Plan.

¹ Sarah Bronwen Horton, *They Leave Their Kidneys in the Fields: Illness, Injury, and Illegality among U.S. Farmworkers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016).

² Larson, Alice. "Oregon Update Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Enumeration Profiles Study". (2013): 38

I thank you for your time and consideration today. PCUN respectfully requests the committee to support HB 2164-4 and HB 3352.

Thank you,

Martha Sonato
Political Director
PCUN