



ALIANZA NACIONAL DE CAMPESINAS, INC.
P.O. Box 20033, Oxnard, CA 93034
(951) 545-1917 · Alianzanacionaldecampesinas.org
alianzanacionalcampesinas@gmail.com

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Dear Co-Chairs, Vice Co-Chairs and Members of the Joint Committee,

My name is Mily Trevino-Sauceda and I am the Executive Director of Alianza Nacional de Campesinas, Inc. I, along with Alianza members from Oregon, submit this statement in strong support of the state of Oregon's Immigrant Justice package, which includes HB 3193 Farmworker Disaster Relief Fund, HB 2976 Indigenous Language Justice, Universal Representation, HB 5011 Home Fund, and SB 611 Food for All Oregonians. We believe that these various pieces of legislation are critical for creating a more inclusive, just Oregon for all of its residents, especially the state's critical farmworker population and their families.

Alianza Nacional de Campesinas is the first national women farmworkers' organization in the U.S. created by current and former farmworker women and women who hail from farmworker families. We have 18 organizations and groups present in over 20 states representing farmworker women and girls. Among the organizations in our alliance are Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN) and Mujeres Luchadoras Progresistas, which are both based in Oregon.

As an organization led by and for farmworkers, we organize and advocate with our communities to ensure our human rights and better standards in the areas of labor and workers' rights, immigration reform, environmental justice and protection from pesticides, and for an end to violence against women. Farmworkers are essential workers who play a critical role in the United States' society and economy, yet too often suffer serious health impacts from the many risks and hazards in agriculture work and have limited resources to access and receive necessary healthcare.

Please find below our commentary in support of each individual piece of legislation within the Immigrant Justice package, followed by a series of testimonies from farmworker women.

HB 3193 Farmworker Disaster Relief Fund

Farmworkers are often the first to experience the impacts of extreme weather conditions and natural disasters. Research has shown that agricultural workers are 35 times more likely to die from heat-related stress than workers in other industries. Extreme heat and drought also are fueling more intense wildfire seasons, and outdoor workers are increasingly having to deal with harmful exposures to wildfire smoke and unhealthy air quality.

During these disasters, including wildfires, floods, and droughts, farmworkers may lose not only their source of livelihood, but also their access to housing, food, and healthcare.¹ From the federal government, producers are provided resources in such situations from the Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments (SURE) program. While producers are extended a helping hand and provided with opportunities to rebuild after a disaster, farmworkers deserve the same. States such as Oregon can fill the gap that the federal government has created, especially with the current administration that excludes migrant populations. HB 3193 will provide temporary financial relief to farmworkers in Oregon who lose work or wages due to extreme weather conditions. Farmworkers *continue* working in extreme weather conditions, from heat to the cold, despite the dangerous impacts to them physically and mentally.

Dulce, from Polk County, Oregon, shares how she has personally been impacted by extreme weather conditions: *“My name is Dulce, I live in Oregon, and my zip code is 97338. I am a farmworker and so is my husband. In my work I have been able to experience the diversity of climates throughout the year; from beautiful spring to freezing winter. In recent years we have felt strong heat waves in the summer. For example, in 2021 we experienced temperatures as high as 113 degrees, which was so intense that many crops were affected. I have also seen many coworkers suffer from dehydration and fainting from heat stress. There are even farmworkers who have died. In the field we have to wear scarves and hats to cover our face and protect it from the sun, even so it is not enough and we end*

¹ See <https://www.farbillaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Farmworkers-Report.pdf>.

each work day with red faces burned by the sun, as well as our arms and neck. According to experts, over time this exposure to UV rays can cause skin cancer.

The heat is dangerous and if we do not drink enough water we can suffer from dehydration or worse, urinary infections. Field work has become dangerous in hot weather. And most of the time we don't have fresh water or a shade to protect us from the sun on our breaks. Many cannot imagine the dangerous conditions in which farmworker women have to work. We are essential workers, our work is important and we have to do it. Because we not only bring food to our homes, but also to all the tables in this country. We are asking for recognition of our important work in the economy of this country and the implementation of laws for a healthy environment that we can inherit to our children, and we ask for reforms that allow the natural conservation of the environment. Today more than ever, it is in your hands to protect the future of the next generation.”

Additionally, Rebecca Velazquez, shares this testimony about her past experience with extreme temperatures and wildfires:

“My name is Rebeca Velazquez and I live in Salem, Oregon. I am part of the Mujeres Luchadoras Progesistas organization. I have been with the organization for 15 years, representing farmworkers in Oregon. I have lived in Oregon for over 30 years, and in recent years, climate change has changed dramatically, affecting us all. When it's hot, it's fire, and when it's cold, it's ice. In 2020, the temperature rose to 118 degrees, causing massive fires where evacuees stopped working. My husband works in construction, and because of the high temperatures, he was stopped from working. Then, because of the fires, he stopped working for two weeks afterward due to the high pollution. All of this caused stress and fear for us. The fire was very close to the town, and on top of that, he was not paid for all the hours and days he was not working, and there was no financial assistance for him because his job is construction. We ask that the Government ensure that aid reaches all those affected, regardless of their area of work or immigration status.”

HB 5011 Home Fund

For much the same reason, we support HB 3193, we also support HB 5011, which provides emergency assistance to immigrant Oregonians to prevent eviction and homelessness. Most farmworkers live in unsatisfactory housing, renting from abusive landlords. When status is an issue, workers struggle to find housing once they lose it for the lack of credit and the ability to run background checks. Such dynamics make them already vulnerable to homelessness, which this legislation would help mitigate.

Mariana, a former farmworker from Marion County (97301), shared that housing is a common challenge for many farmworkers. *“Many families struggle to find housing they can afford and end up living with another family. I’ve seen one or two bedroom apartments with over 10 people living there.”*

Elia Cordero, a former farmworker and current organizer from Marion County, (97071), shared that women farmworkers who are subjected to domestic violence and abuse in the home sometimes do not have housing options and stay in dangerous situations. Others who are able to escape violent homes and live independently, have experienced the threat of having to return or live somewhere that puts them at risk because it is difficult to have housing security when farmworkers do not have income and job security. Emergencies like in HB 5011 could particularly help victims and survivors of domestic violence.

Francisca Aparicio, a former farmworker and current organizer from Salem (97305), shared that she’s met farmworkers who were at risk of being evicted and were able to make a payment to their landlord to prevent eviction with the relief from the USDA’s Farm and Food Worker Relief Program. For farmworker families, who are evicted, finding housing is challenging because of language barriers, not knowing which resources are available, sometimes unable to pay for high deposits, fear of connecting with local government offices, and often rely on community and charity aid. For these reasons, it is important that the Immigrant Justice Package is approved because it addresses various interconnected issues that particularly impact immigrant farmworkers.

An anonymous farmworker from Marion County, Oregon, shares the below testimony:

“Farmworkers are currently in a very difficult situation. Because the wages they are receiving are very low, and even more so now that they are not working and getting paid overtime, it is very difficult to cover household expenses and pay the rent. Electricity, gas, and other services are also very difficult. Right now, it is also very difficult to buy food for the family because food is very expensive. Regarding housing, sometimes we feel like we are being evicted for not paying rent, but we are in a very difficult economic situation for our families.

We are also being affected by the lack of employment; many people are losing their jobs. Ranchers are making the decision to let the harvest go to waste because they are not paying overtime. Now that harvest season is approaching, our employers are no longer giving us work. They are also offering us alternatives, such as contractors, to provide us with employment. In Marion County, a fundamental part of the county is suffering the consequences of the lack of employment. Many farmers depend on farmwork to have a place to live.”

HB 2976 Indigenous Language Justice

Besides Spanish, many of the farmworkers we represent speak various indigenous languages, including Mam, Nahaul, Zapoetco, Triqui, and Mixteco. This legislation, which dedicates resources to non-profit groups for interpretation services, would assist in advancing equity in the state and rural areas particularly.

Farmworkers are exposed to many health risks and often do not receive important information in a language they understand and also struggle to communicate with medical and health providers. Interpretation services would provide the opportunity for families to not just understand critical information from medical staff and providers but also be able to ask questions and better inform doctors of their background, needs, and circumstances.

Josefina, from Salem (97305), shares this personal testimony: *“My husband has been a farmworker for the past 20 years and for much of this time, we didn’t even know what a pesticide was. He would apply the pesticides to the plants without knowing how dangerous they were because no one told him what it was. This lack of information ended up hurting*

our family when he returned home from work one day after working with the pesticides and I washed his clothes with the rest of our family's laundry as usual. This load of laundry also had my son's clothes and when I put these clothes on him, he had an allergic reaction all over his body. When I saw that his body was covered in a rash, I took him to a doctor, who didn't ask specific questions about the pesticide exposure. As a parent, I felt like the doctor did not understand the risk of the pesticides or have the information to help me protect my family better."

Universal Representation

Ongoing attacks on immigrants around the United States shows that people without legal status are increasingly vulnerable to arbitrary arrest, detention and potential deportation. Codifying this into Oregon law would assure basic constitutional principles for every resident of the state, assuring them the chance also to potentially fix their status.

SB 611 Food for All Oregonians

Currently, most farmworkers are not eligible to receive SNAP benefits due to their immigration status, despite being essential workers in the food system. Many families are not able to afford the produce they harvest and need access to assistance programs to ensure their families' nutritional needs are being met. SB 611 is also addressing the importance of outreach and education so that families are aware of how to access this assistance.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our statement. For more information or questions regarding farmworker women issues, please contact Mily Trevino-Sauceda at mily@campesinasunite.org or Amy Tamayo at amy.tamayo@campesinasunite.org.