



CHIRLA
Coalition for Humane
Immigrant Rights

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November 19, 2019

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler
Chairman, Judiciary Committee
2141 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Doug Collins
Ranking Member, Judiciary Committee
2142 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Nadler, Ranking Member Collins, and members of the Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA), I write to express our support for the Farm Workforce Modernization Act of 2019, H.R. 5038, a bipartisan bill which would provide a pathway to legal status and citizenship for undocumented workers and their families.

Established in 1986, CHIRLA's serves as the largest statewide immigrant rights organization in California with national impact mission is to achieve a just society fully inclusive of immigrants. We organize and serve individuals, institutions, and coalitions to build power, transform public opinion, and change policies to achieve full human, civil, and labor rights for our immigrant communities and our nation.

Agriculture is one of the most vital and largest industry sectors in California and it produced \$50 billion worth of produce during the 2018 crop year.ⁱ In our state, we produce an estimated 1/3 of our nation's vegetables, 2/3 of the nation's fruits and nuts, including 90% of strawberries, among other food products. This would not be possible if it were not for the roughly 500,000 - 800,000 farmworkers workers in our state, of which 75% are undocumented.ⁱⁱ

Despite being instrumental in producing an estimated \$133 billion output on U.S. farms each year, farmworkers find themselves living in miserable conditions, remain one of the most impoverished and underserved populations in the U.S., and suffer morbidity and mortality rates greater than the vast majority of the American population. This is the direct result of the occupational hazards as well as poverty, substandard living conditions, migrancy, and language and cultural barriers.ⁱⁱⁱ

The nation faces an agriculture labor shortage as it needs skilled workers to harvest produce, and the number of current workers is not enough as Americans are less likely to work in the farmworkers sector.^{iv}

HEADQUARTERS

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The Farm Workforce Modernization Act revises the H-2A program to address some of the aforementioned concerns. By providing farmworkers with a pathway to legal status, farmworkers would have an opportunity to improve their living and working conditions, including challenging serious labor abuses that may exist and go unreported because of their undocumented status. The bill also aims to provide the same legal protections that exist for U.S. farmworkers to H-2A workers.

CHIRLA acknowledges and applauds the collaboration between Representative Zoe Lofgren (D-CA) and Representative Dan Newhouse (R-WA) in moving the Farm Workforce Modernization Act. We especially appreciate the bipartisan nature, with 24 Democratic and 22 Republican co-sponsors, of the support for the backbone of this nation's agricultural sector.

We hope the bill sails through markup without delay, and respectfully request that the House sends H.R. 5038 to the Senate forthwith. Should you have any questions, please contact Isabel J. Sanchez, National Policy Advocate, at isanchez@chirla.org or at (202) 641-1525.

Sincerely,

Angelica Salas
Executive Director

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ⁱ <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/statistics/>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.farmworkerfamily.org/information>

ⁱⁱⁱ https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Martin_Donohoe/publication/10767354_Health_Issues_of_Migrant_and_Seasonal_Farmworkers/links/00b4953791290e1ba9000000/Health-Issues-of-Migrant-and-Seasonal-Farmworkers.pdf

^{iv} <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-duvall-farm-labor-shortage-20190212-story.html>

