Social Justice for Food and Farm Workers

Health, COVID-19 and Beyond

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Our mission is to create practical solutions at the intersection of vulnerability, migration, and health.

We envision a world based on health justice and equity, where migration is never an impediment to well-being.
A broad, diverse coalition that uses advocacy, grassroots organizing, and public education to win basic health and safety rights and protections for the poultry workers, crab pickers, and field workers rendered vulnerable by our industrialized food system.

Marylanders for FOOD & FARM Worker Protection

- Mandatory worker protections in a State Emergency Temporary Standard
- Data collection for infectious disease outbreaks by industry and occupation
- Protective Heat Stress Standard
- Emergency Preparedness Plan for Infectious Disease Outbreaks
Who are our food and farm workers?
• Largely immigrant or migrant
• Limited English Proficiency
  ✓ Spanish
  ✓ Haitian-Creole
  ✓ Indigenous
• Mixed immigration status
• Lower levels of formal education and literacy
Pesticide Exposure
Farmworkers are 20 times more likely to die from heat related illness than other workers.
- Crowded housing
- Transportation
- Pesticide and chemical exposure
- Injuries
- Infectious disease
- Carbon monoxide poisoning
- Chronic illnesses
• Musculoskeletal disorders
  ✓ Back strain
  ✓ Carpal Tunnel

• Exposure to chemicals and pathogens
  ✓ Disinfectants - Registered Pesticides

• Traumatic injuries from machines and tools
  ✓ Amputations
Vulnerabilities

• Cultural and language differences
• Low-wage
• Inherent dangers and health risks of occupation
• Immigration status
• Migratory lifestyle
• Lack access to health care, insurance or financial resources
• Lack of regulatory protection
Farmworker Exceptionalism

• Workers’ compensation

• Few OSHA standards to protect farmworkers
  – Water and sanitation, 1987
  – Only farms with 11 workers or housing

• EPA not OSHA - Pesticides
“Essential” workers

- Farmworkers
- Meat, chicken and seafood processors
- Dairy workers
More than 70% of immigrants in the United States work in jobs classified as “essential”
• COVID-19 is affecting Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Immigrants and other people of color the most.

• Hispanic or Latinx in comparison to White, Non-Hispanic
  • 1.9x Cases
  • 2.8x Hospitalization
  • 2.3x Death

Source: CDC, 09/2021
Risk of Infection, Hospitalization, and Death compared to White People in the United States, Adjusted for Age

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Black
- Hispanic
- Asian
- White

Cases: 1.7, 1.1, 1.9, 0.7, 1.0
Hospitalizations: 3.5, 2.8, 2.8, 1.0, 1.0
Deaths: 2.4, 2.0, 2.3, 1.0, 1.0

NOTE: Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race but are categorized as Hispanic; other groups are non-Hispanic.
936,000 Agricultural Workers Infected with COVID-19
Purdue University
Public Health Policy v. Worker Benefits

- No Paid Sick Leave
- Limited Testing
  - Few requirements
- Limited PPE
- Housing
- Transportation
Blame workers

• “Home and social conditions” cause of meatpacking outbreaks

• “Living Circumstances in Certain Cultures”

• “They go to work in school buses and they’re all packed in there like sardines.”

Photo © Earldotter.com
“You hear the job that we do is essential but you realize as a worker you are not treated as essential. You are treated as dispensable.”

Gerardo Reyes Chavez,
Coalition for Immokalee Workers
“We’re seeing the impact when you don’t have [sufficient] regulations, and [workplaces] are unprepared.”

Dr. Eva Galvez, Virginia Garcia Health Center
Regulatory and Policy Solutions

• Temporary Standards or Emergency Orders
  – Vaccines
  – PPE
  – Physical distancing
  – Workplace disinfection
  – Worker Test
  – Changes to housing and transportation designed to reduce the spread of the coronavirus.
  – Paid Sick leave
• Improved surveillance and data collection
• Industry and Occupation
• Document the work-relatedness of COVID-19
Our Food and Farm Workers Deserve a Safe and Healthy Workplace!
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Attend our virtual trainings

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