

More farmworker labor camps coming to Ventura County?

Inbox



Maricela Morales, CAUSE Unsubscribe Fri, Jan 28, 9:02 AM (3 days ago)

to me



Dear CAUSE friends,

We're seeing a worrying trend in local agriculture: the rapid shift towards the H-2A temporary worker visa program.

After the notorious Bracero Program ended in the 1960's, conditions for farmworkers improved. Wages increased, workers organized unions, and farmworker families moved from isolated migrant labor camps to settle in neighborhoods and build community ties.

But in the 1980's the Reagan Administration created the H-2A program: a kinder, gentler guestworker program, but one that shared the same fundamental flaws. Workers are brought to an unfamiliar place where employers control their housing, food, transportation, and visa, then sent home after a season of work, creating a power imbalance that can lead to abuse.

An NBC report found over 12,000 cases of H-2A labor violations in 2019, a 150% increase since 2014!

Some of the largest COVID-19 outbreaks in our region have been in H-2A labor camps like Villa Las Brisas in Oxnard, affecting 94% of the 216 workers. It's no surprise when federal H-2A standards are 50 square feet of sleeping space per worker and 10 workers to each shower and toilet!

Ventura County is considering an update to its Farmworker Housing Ordinance that would streamline permitting for bunk-style labor camps, making it easier to build H-2A barracks than apartments for farmworker families!



H-2A workers are already vulnerable, but are even more so when isolated in labor camps in the fields of the unincorporated county, far away from city services, medical needs, and legal aid. Public transparency is vital for this barracks-style housing, with the opportunity for farmworkers' rights organizations to weigh in to ensure safe and healthy living conditions.

Please email the Ventura County Board of Supervisors to amend the proposed Farmworker Housing Ordinance to require Group Quarters like H-2A labor camps to be approved by the Planning Commission at a public hearing!

TAKE ACTION FOR FARMWORKER RIGHTS!

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