



December 4, 2015

Dear Member of Congress,

We, the undersigned organizations, urge you to oppose all harmful immigration appropriations riders, including those that would defund or pause vital refugee assistance, penalize communities that have enacted trust policies, limit access to essential social benefits, weaken due process, or undermine fundamental rights and protections for working people. The appropriations process should not be used to bypass the legislative process, nor should it be used to make substantive changes to our nation's immigration laws. We write to affirm our support for policies that foster community health and safety, protect human rights and due process, and promote safe workplaces and family-sustaining wages.

Among all of these important issues, we draw attention in this letter to shameful proposals to strip away basic protections for low-wage workers in the H-2B temporary non-agricultural visa program. At a time when so many working people, including immigrant workers, are mobilizing across the country to call for fair schedules and living wages, Congress should not enact measures that would further erode wages and standards for difficult and often dangerous work in industries such as landscaping, forestry, seafood processing, hospitality, carnivals, and construction.

H-2B workers are extremely vulnerable to abuse due to the structure of the seasonal visa program, which authorizes them to work long hours for low pay, but does not allow them to change employers, exercise their rights or truly integrate into our society. A recent BuzzFeed report exposed rampant abuses in the H-2 visa programs amounting to a "new American slavery," and numerous other reports have found alarming levels of abuse, including forced labor, visa fraud, wage theft, sexual harassment, and egregious discrimination. H-2B workers who speak up to raise concerns risk severe forms of retaliation such as deportation and blacklisting—threats that effectively block access to justice and allow patterns of exploitation to persist unchecked.

Industries have fought for years to block any efforts to ensure reasonable protections for H-2B workers and the U.S. resident workers employed alongside them. Allowing H-2B employers to recruit workers at substandard wages depresses the labor market and hurts all working people in those occupations and communities. Last April, after extensive legal battles, the Departments of Labor and Homeland Security published an interim rule providing basic protections to H-2B and U.S. workers alike, including requirements that employers pay prevailing wages and guarantee workers a minimum number of hours. It is no surprise that H-2B employers would attempt to use the appropriations process to gut this rule at the expense of those with the least power—the workers. What is surprising and deeply troubling is that members of Congress from both parties would legitimize such clear efforts to weaken minimum labor standards, despite overwhelming evidence that vulnerable working people in our country need more protection and oversight of their rights, not less.



We are a nation of immigrants, and our policies should reflect that proud legacy. We strongly support comprehensive immigration reform that would create a broad and inclusive pathway to citizenship, enact humane enforcement strategies, maintain our humanitarian commitments, and uplift workers' rights and civil liberties. In the meantime, we urge you to reject harmful appropriations or other riders that would turn our backs on families in need, scapegoat immigrant communities, cut off funding for local policing, or further the exploitation of hard-working men and women.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Basic Legal Equality  
The Advocates for Human Rights  
Advocating Opportunity  
AFL-CIO  
The Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking - ATEST  
American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees  
American Federation of Teachers  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC  
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund  
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO  
Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach  
Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs  
Castanares Consulting  
Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas - CATA  
Center for Law and Social Policy  
Centro de los Derechos del Migrante, Inc.  
Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking  
Economic Policy Institute  
Equal Justice Center  
Family Farm Defenders  
Farmworker and Landscaper Advocacy Project  
Farmworker Justice  
Freedom Network USA  
Friends of Farmworkers, Inc.  
Global Workers Justice Alliance  
Interfaith Worker Justice  
Jobs With Justice  
Kids for College  
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, AFL-CIO  
Labor and Employment Committee of the National Lawyers Guild  
LatinoJustice PRLDEF  
League of United Latin American Citizens  
Legal Aid Justice Center  
Metamorphosis Law, LLC  
National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives



9to5, National Association of Working Women  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Day Laborer Organizing Network  
National Domestic Workers Alliance  
National Employment Law Project  
National Employment Lawyers Association  
National Farm Workers Ministry  
National Guestworker Alliance  
National Legal Aid and Defender Association  
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund  
National Hispanic Medical Association  
National Immigration Law Center  
National Korean American Service and Education Consortium  
OneAmerica  
PathStone Corporation  
Pesticide Action Network  
Polaris Project  
Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste - PCUN  
SER-Jobs for Progress National, Inc.  
Service Employees International Union  
Southern Poverty Law Center  
Sugar Law Center for Economic & Social Justice  
Telamon Corporation  
UNITE HERE  
United Farm Workers of America  
United Food and Commercial Workers International Labor Union  
Urban Justice Center  
We Belong Together

Regional and State

CASA of Oregon  
California Employment Lawyers Association  
Central Florida LCLAA Chapter  
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles  
Farmworker Association of Florida  
Florida Immigrant Coalition, Inc.  
Greater Rochester Coalition for Immigration Justice  
Idaho Community Action Network  
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights  
Immigrant Worker Center Collaborative  
North Carolina Justice Center  
Northwest Forest Worker Center  
Northwest Workers' Justice Project  
Organizacion en California de Lideres Campesinas, Inc.  
Pacific Southwest District/UUA



Pax Christi Florida  
Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition  
Sisters, Home Visitors of Mary, MI  
Student Action with Farmworkers  
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Virginia  
Wayne Action for Racial Equality  
Worker Justice Center of New York, Inc.