

INTERNATIONAL LABOR RECRUITMENT: ABUSES ACROSS VISA CATEGORIES

Talking Points

Regardless of visa category, employment sector, race, gender or national origin, internationally recruited workers face disturbingly common patterns of recruitment abuse. Workers suffer fraud, discrimination, severe economic coercion, retaliation, blacklisting and, in some cases, forced labor, indentured servitude, debt bondage and human trafficking. From visa category to visa category, regulations vary enormously, in some cases even incentivizing recruiters and employers to engage in abuses.

- Current law is inadequate at protecting internationally recruited workers from these abuses.
- In a recent study of H-2 workers, Centro de los Derechos del Migrante, Inc. (CDM) found that 58% of workers reported paying recruitment fees to come to the United States to work, and 47% of workers took out loans to cover recruitment expenses.
- Payment of recruitment fees leaves workers vulnerable to exploitation and reluctant to leave bad working conditions in the U.S. because of money they owe back home.
- Senate Bill 744 would explicitly prohibit foreign labor contractors from charging workers recruitment fees, including visa, visa processing, transportation, legal expenses, placement fees and other costs.
- Senate Bill 744 contains much needed reforms that would strengthen protections for workers across visa categories by improving transparency in the recruitment process, creating accountability in employment relationships, regulating the causes of economic coercion, and prohibiting discrimination and retaliation.
- Because abuses of workers are pervasive across visa categories, a comprehensive reform to international labor recruitment is critically needed.
- A piecemeal, visa-by-visa approach to reform will leave entire categories and industries vulnerable to the exploitation that workers currently face.