



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,”¹ 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

¹ Jessica Garrison, [The New American Slavery: Invited to the US, Foreign Workers Find a Nightmare](#), Buzz Feed, July 24, 2015. See also the companion article – Jessica Garrison, [All You Americans are Fired](#), Buzz Feed, December 1, 2015.



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
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 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
PathStone Corporation
Pesticide Action Network
Polaris Project
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 Food and Commercial Workers International Labor Union
Urban Justice Center
We Belong Together

Regional and State

CASA of Oregon
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 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
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Virginia
Wayne Action for Racial Equality
Worker Justice Center of New York, Inc.