



Dear Co-Chairs, Vice Co-Chairs and Members of the Joint Committee,

My name is Cynthia Ramirez and I am a Policy Associate with PCUN, Oregon's Farmworker Union. I am writing to urge you to prioritize HB 3193, the Farmworker Disaster Relief Fund.

Farmworkers are often the first to experience the impacts of extreme weather conditions. Research has shown that agricultural workers are 35 times more likely to die from heat-related stress than workers in other industries. Extreme heat and drought also are fueling more intense wildfire seasons, and outdoor workers are increasingly having to deal with harmful exposures to wildfire smoke and unhealthy air quality.

Our state's agriculture industry heavily relies on immigrant labor with more than 72,000 farmworkers. Most of them are immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala, and Central America. Our farmworkers are proud to be Oregonians. One of our members stated, "I am very happy to live in Oregon. I already feel like this is my country."

This bill would create a permanent fund under the Oregon Health Authority to support farmworkers who are impacted by extreme weather conditions. In recent years, we have experienced an increase of dangerous weather conditions such as deadly heatwaves, unprecedented wildfires, and unhealthy air quality. HB 3193 will provide temporary financial relief to farmworkers in Oregon who lose work or wages due to extreme weather conditions. Farmworkers *continue* working in extreme weather conditions, from heat domes to the cold, despite the dangerous impacts to them physically and mentally.

Research reports that farmworkers are 35 times more likely to suffer from heat related deaths compared to other industries.¹ In summer 2021, Oregon experienced a record breaking heat wave where unfortunately, we lost a member of our community, Sebastian Francisco Perez, a farmworker and immigrant from Guatemala. Farmworkers continue putting their lives at risk for Oregon's agriculture industry. Our farmworkers

¹ Gubernot, Diane M., et al. "Characterizing occupational heat-related mortality in the United States, 2000-2010: an analysis using the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries database." *Am J Ind Med.*, 2015. National Library of Medicine, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4657558/>. Accessed 21 02 2025.

are disproportionately affected due to lack of access to healthcare, lack of worker protections, and lack of workplace training.

I urge you to prioritize the full \$10 million funding request for HB 3193 to provide the support for our farmworkers in Oregon.

Thank you,

Cynthia Ramirez
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PCUN