



Farmworker Justice Press Statement for EWG Press Call on Rep. Khanna and Sen. Warren's [Essential Workers Bill of Rights](#) – April 30, 2020

Good afternoon. My name is Alexis Guild. I am the Director of Health Policy and Programs at Farmworker Justice. Farmworker Justice is a national farmworker advocacy organization based in Washington, DC. We appreciate the opportunity to be here today to discuss the need for protections for workers on farms and ranches during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Farmworkers have been designated essential workers who are expected to work. They are at the front lines of the pandemic, risking their own health to ensure a stable supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and other products. We are concerned about the health and safety of farmworkers. Farmworkers are getting sick from COVID-19 and the worst may be yet to come. We are hearing from workers that many employers are not following CDC recommendations. Farmworkers' working and living conditions often place them in danger of exposure to COVID-19. They tend to lack adequate access to handwashing stations in the fields, are not necessarily provided personal protective equipment such as masks, and often live in crowded and substandard housing. Few receive health insurance from their employers and their low wages mean that many do not have regular access to health care. The majority of farmworkers are undocumented immigrants and they are especially vulnerable to exploitation and are ineligible for public programs and benefits such as Medicaid and SNAP. The refusal of federal OSHA to issue an Emergency Occupational Safety Standard denies many farmworkers protections for themselves and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Farmworker Justice is working with advocates and partners across the country to raise the concerns of farmworkers, help farmworkers protect themselves and their family members, and advocate for protections at the federal and state level. We commend Congressman Khanna and Senator Warren for their Essential Workers Bill of Rights, which recognizes the important contributions of farmworkers and others and provides solutions to ensure workers are protected and treated with dignity. We strongly believe that the Bill of Rights, which includes health and safety protections, meaningful compensation in the form of hazard pay and the guarantee of a livable wage, universal access to paid sick and family leave, and access to health care regardless of insurance or immigration status, are crucial for farmworkers, their families, and rural communities.

Farmworkers should be able to work without fear about what will happen if they become ill. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the essential role of farmworkers in our nation's economy and the hazards they confront everyday for our food security. Congress should pass legislation that includes the policies in the Essential Workers Bill of Rights. Thank you.