

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**STATEMENT OF FARMWORKER JUSTICE ON THE INTRODUCTION OF THE
AGRICULTURAL WORKER PROGRAM ACT OF 2019**
Bill would stabilize farm labor force, provide protections for immigrant farmworkers

(WASHINGTON, DC) Farmworker Justice welcomes the introduction of the Agricultural Worker Program Act of 2019 and strongly supports its enactment. We thank Senator Feinstein, Representative Lofgren and other Members of Congress for their leadership in support of reasonable, workable and fair immigration reform and their attention to farmworkers.

This bill builds momentum toward comprehensive immigration reform while addressing the unique and urgent needs of agricultural and rural communities. Americans depend on farmworkers for abundant, safe, healthy, and affordable food. Yet, the status quo for farmworkers and agricultural employers is untenable.

“With a large portion of agricultural workers in the U.S. lacking immigration status, and farmworker families living under the threat of arrest and deportation, Congress must reform our broken immigration system. The opportunity for legal immigration status is crucial to enabling farmworkers to live and work productively without fear and to seek improvements to their working and living conditions. The Agricultural Worker Program Act would help ensure a stable, legal workforce in agriculture, which is good for farmworkers, employers, consumers and the national interest,” said Bruce Goldstein, President of Farmworker Justice.

The bill would establish an earned legalization program under which certain farmworkers who meet agricultural work requirements, national security clearance requirements, and other obligations are given temporary permission to work in agriculture for three to five years and the opportunity to earn immigration status with a path to citizenship. Their immediate family members in the United States also would have an opportunity to convert their status.

The bill would not make any changes to the H-2A agricultural guestworker program. The H-2A program, which allows an unlimited number of work visas each year, has modest but important protections against abuse of U.S. and foreign workers that should be strengthened and more effectively enforced. The Agricultural Worker Program Act would minimize the need for employers’ use of the H-2A guestworker program by providing a meaningful opportunity for immigration status for the hard-working undocumented farmworkers who put food on our table.

Farmworker Justice is a national advocacy organization for farmworkers with over thirty-five years of experience serving the farmworker community regarding immigration and labor policy.

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