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Farmworker Justice Statement on Rep. Goodlatte's Anti-Immigrant Bill

Yesterday, Rep. Bob Goodlatte, Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, and Representatives McCaul, Labrador and McSally, released a hard-line anti-immigration proposal entitled the "Securing America's Future Act." Farmworker Justice opposes this multi-faceted proposal, which incorporates Goodlatte's anti-worker, anti-immigrant Agricultural Guestworker Act. The bill combines many of the worst elements of anti-immigrant policies, including building a costly border wall, increasing arrests and deportations of undocumented immigrants, attacking sanctuary cities, and eliminating existing opportunities for family reunification as well as the diversity visa program. Although it purports to offer relief to Dreamers, the bill only offers a three-year, temporary legal status, without any permanent solution or path to citizenship.

The bill would also require employers to use E-verify, which would exacerbate discrimination against Latinos and foreign-born workers, who make up the majority of the farm labor source. If enacted, the agricultural guestworker provisions in the bill would replace the current H-2A agricultural guestworker program with a devastating new program, the H-2C program. The H-2C program would expand employer access to potentially millions of vulnerable new "guestworkers," while slashing worker protections for hundreds of thousands of U.S. farmworkers, leading to job losses, lower wages and exploitation. Instead of providing experienced undocumented farmworkers with a path to immigration status and citizenship, the only option this bill provides is for those workers to self-deport with limited options to return as subjugated contract laborers under the new H-2C program.

Rep. Goodlatte, a long-time immigration restrictionist, is trying to push his extreme anti-immigrant agenda at a moment of bipartisan negotiations between legislators and the White House to reach a much-needed solution for Dreamers. Farmworker Justice President Bruce Goldstein stated: "Congress must reject the Goodlatte bill because it is anti-immigrant, anti-worker, cruel, impractical, costly and harmful to our food and agriculture systems. Congress must provide a solution now for Dreamers, many of whom are farmworkers and from farmworker families. We must continue in the longer term to reform our broken immigration system through policies that respect our history as a nation of immigrants and our democratic and economic freedoms."