



# California Legislature

January 20, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
House Speaker  
1236 Longworth H.O.B.  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
House Minority Leader  
H-204, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

We are deeply troubled and concerned about the failure to allocate any of the \$1.5 billion as appropriated under H.R. 133 – The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 – to protect farmworkers against the COVID-19 pandemic that disproportionately impacts Latinos and other ethnic minorities. We write to urge you to help reverse this misguided decision and to reinstate the initial aim of these provisions: to protect these essential workers who put their lives in danger every day in order to feed our nation. As Californians, you know how crucial our agriculture industry is to the nation, and that farmworkers are both essential members in our communities as well as indispensable to our national food security.

Agriculture, labor and congressional leaders thoughtfully collaborated to ensure that H.R. 133 safeguards our agricultural workers against COVID-19. The bill was signed into law and included provisions to purchase and distribute agricultural products and to provide grants and loans to protect agricultural workers from COVID-19. However, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), at the behest of the Trump Administration, on January 4, 2021 announced it would spend \$1.5 billion on a fifth round of the Farmers to Families Food Box Program and has made no provisions available to protect farmworkers against COVID-19.

Farmworkers have borne the brunt of this pandemic on multiple fronts and this latest omission of protections for farmworkers will only spawn further health and economic devastation. They toil in our fields so that our families continue to have food on our tables and the national food supply chain remains intact. Yet, many agricultural workers also live in our most disadvantaged communities, where they struggle to support their own families and access basic health care. They live in the shadows and are vulnerable to COVID-19 in ways that most of us are not.

As lawmakers, we were stunned to learn of the decision to direct these critical funds to the food box program.<sup>1</sup> But we also were heartened by a [bipartisan letter](#) signed by more than 70 of your congressional colleagues imploring the USDA to restore the original objective of H.R. 133.

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<sup>1</sup> [Kate Cimini](#). “Farmworkers lose out on \$1.5B COVID-19 safety funding after USDA springs surprise spending.” *CalMatters*. January 13, 2021.

We add our voices to this urgent call. After nearly a year into this crippling pandemic, we must pull together for the good of all. Our economy and schools cannot be safely reopened if any of our people are left behind.

In California, we honor all essential workers – from our fields to our hospitals, from our packing houses to our markets – who have kept our economy and health care system operating throughout this crisis.

That is why we urge you to govern with compassion and decency and work quickly to allocate funds as intended under H.R. 133 to protect our brothers and sisters who labor in essential agricultural work through each and every day of this terrible pandemic.

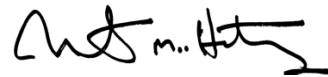
Our strength and determination is rooted in our diversity. But this pandemic has shone an ugly spotlight on the inequities present in our society. We ask that you immediately prioritize COVID-19 protections for farmworkers as you also work toward our long-term shared goal of comprehensive immigration reform.

We are ready to assist you in any way we can.

Sincerely,



**Anthony Rendon**  
Speaker of the Assembly



**Senator Robert M. Hertzberg**  
Senate Majority Leader  
Senate District 18



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Assembly District 31



**Assemblymember Eloise Gomez Reyes**  
Assembly Majority Leader  
Assembly District 47



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Senate District 24



**Speaker pro Tempore Kevin Mullin**  
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**Assemblymember Robert Rivas**  
Chair, Committee on Agriculture  
Assembly District 30



**Assemblymember Cristina Garcia**  
Chair, Legislative Women's Caucus  
Assembly District 58



**Senator Nancy Skinner**  
Vice Chair, Legislative Women's Caucus  
Senate District 9



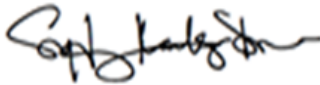
**Senator Susan Talamantes Eggman**  
Vice Chair, Legislative LGBTQ Caucus  
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**Senator Steve Bradford**  
Chair, Legislative Black Caucus  
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**Assemblymember Mike A. Gipson**  
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**Assemblymember Sydney Kamlager**  
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**Assemblymember Laurie Davies**  
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**Assemblymember Janet Nguyen**  
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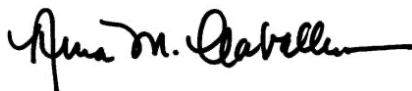
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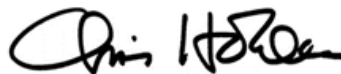
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**Senator Connie M. Leyva**  
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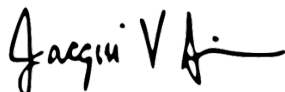
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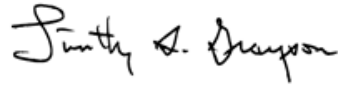
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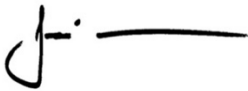
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**Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan**  
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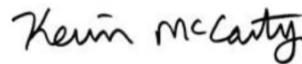
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**Assemblymember Jim Wood**  
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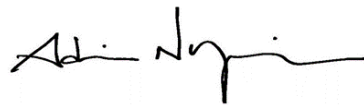
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