

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 15, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, District of Columbia, 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, District of Columbia, 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer,

The COVID-19 health crisis has presented our nation with challenges unlike any we have seen in our lifetimes. During this crisis, our frontline farmworkers are laboring every day to put food on America's dinner table and maintain the nation's food supply. As the virus threatens the resiliency of our food supply chains, it has never been more important to ensure the well-being of our agricultural producers and workforce. Future legislation in response to the coronavirus pandemic must include protections for these vital members of our communities. Among them, for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to issue an Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS) requiring employers to develop and implement a comprehensive plan to protect their workers.

We support ongoing efforts to help agricultural producers through this crisis, and also believe it is critical to recognize that our nation's food security depends on the ability of farmworkers to continue to work safely to produce our nation's food. To support farmworkers (regardless of immigration status) and contain the spread of COVID-19 in agricultural communities, we urge that any future emergency funding to agricultural producers require recipients to:

- Provide sick pay and family leave for farmworkers to be able to sustain themselves (should they or other family members fall ill with COVID-19 symptoms) and protect other workers from exposure.
- Provide pandemic or hazard premium pay for farmworkers who are putting themselves and their families at a higher risk of exposure to COVID-19 to feed the nation.
- Maintain payrolls and limit farmworker layoffs and furloughs.
- Implement CDC recommendations on sanitation and social distancing in work sites, employer provided housing and transportation.

Farmworkers and their families need our support and protection. Their work for this country should be respected and honored as our food supply depends on them.

As this crisis evolves and Congress continues to explore response packages, we stand ready to work with you to ensure these protections are made available.

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Sincerely,

/s/Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

/s/Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

/s/Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

/s/Ron Wyden
United States Senator

/s/Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

/s/Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

/s/Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

/s/Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

/s/Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator