

The Agricultural Migrant/Seasonal Worker Position Statement
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS LEELANAU COUNTY
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State and local governments should pass legislation and publicly fund programs and services that address the ongoing challenges faced by agricultural employers to recruit and retain viable, skilled migrant/seasonal farm workers. It is quality of life issues for workers and their families that draw workers in a competitive labor market. Quality of life is enhanced by safe, healthy, affordable housing; education; health care; fair treatment by law enforcement and other services provided by state and local government offices and agencies.

I. Local and State Law Enforcement

A. Should minimize language barriers and overcome distrust between law enforcement and the migrant/seasonal agricultural worker community by having reliable interpretation services readily available; by securing cultural awareness training for all department employees; by developing avenues to broaden communication; and by providing legal rights information to the migrant/seasonal agricultural worker community.

B. Should allow a lawfully present, qualifying person to apply for or secure and renew a driver's license or obtain an identification card.

II. Public Education

A. Local School Districts

1. Should provide a quality education and support for the children and parents in migrant/seasonal agricultural worker families.

2. Should offer English as a Second Language (ESL) for children and parents, including evening classes.

3. Should offer social programs to integrate students and migrant/seasonal families into the school community

III. Health Care

A. Publicly funded health care services should provide day and evening hours of service, on-site interpreters and access to mental health and substance abuse services without requiring documentation as criteria for care.

B. The migrant/seasonal agricultural worker community should be made aware of services available and how to access those services.

IV. Housing Quantity and Quality

A. Township and County Planning and Zoning Ordinances

1. Should allow agricultural labor housing year round or for three-season occupancy.
2. Should reflect consistency among township planning commissions and zoning boards to allow a streamlined permit and building process in support of quality agricultural labor housing.

B. County Governments

1. Should adopt and administer government public funding programs in support of repair and refurbishment of unlicensed agricultural labor housing.
2. Should appoint a bilingual facilitator to handle complaints to the Board of Health and Construction Code Department.
3. Should give priority to regular and timely oversight, inspection, and enforcement of health and construction standards for all area unlicensed agricultural labor rental housing.

C. State Government

1. Should increase public funding for building new or refurbishing existing agricultural labor housing.
2. Should eliminate agricultural labor housing permit and licensing conflicts between state agencies such as the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) and the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA).
3. Should expand licensing for and require inspections of agricultural labor housing with four or fewer migrant/seasonal workers.

V. County Boards, Commissions, Committees, Authorities and Non-Governmental and Not-for-Profit Agencies which receive county funds

A. Should work cooperatively with local governmental units and organizations to address the needs of agricultural employers and the migrant/seasonal agricultural worker community.

B. Should provide publications for the public in both English and Spanish for distribution to agricultural employers to be given to their migrant/seasonal workers.

C. Should have reliable interpretation services readily available.