

## Keep Washington Working Work Group Meeting Notes

April 3, 2020 | Online via Skype

### Attendees Members:

Paula Arno Martinez, WA State Commission on Hispanic Affairs  
Cariño Barragan, United Food and Commercial Workers – Local 21  
Paul Benz, Faith Action Network  
Malou Chavez, Northwest Immigrant Rights Project  
Bre Elsey, Washington State Farm Bureau  
Alex Galarza, Northwest Justice Project  
Antonio Ginatta, Columbia Legal Services  
Eric Gonzalez, ACLU  
Karen Lewis, Washington State University  
Monserrat Padilla, Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network  
Sandra Rodarte, Latino Civic Alliance  
Kristin Kershaw Snapp, Washington State Fruit Tree Association  
Rich Stolz, OneAmerica & Chairperson of the group  
Keelcy Perez Woolley, WA State Commission of Hispanic Affairs  
Alejandro Sanchez, Special Assistant to the Governor  
Lisa Brown, Director, Commerce  
Chris Green, Assistant Director, Commerce  
Tammy Deets, Commerce  
Marie Splaine, Commerce  
Rachel Revisky, Commerce

### Absent Members:

Julia Gorton, Washington Hospitality Association  
Sam Cho, Washington State Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs  
Victoria Mena, Colectiva Legal del Pueblo

### Meeting Notes

Marie and Rachel set up a collaborative virtual whiteboard. We started with everyone identifying their “superpower”.

Director Brown gave a brief overview of her work in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact to people and businesses in Washington. Following that, she asked work group members to share their top concerns. Participating members mentioned wide ranging topics, from unemployment benefit gaps to potential collapse of food supply chain (see notes in Addendum A). Director Brown is working with Suzi Levine, Commissioner of Employment Security Department to create a matrix of assistance that will be available through the state and the federal administration. She

understands that there will be gaps, especially related to equity, and asked the work group to provide a report of the discussions.

The remainder of the meeting focused on defining and grouping the issues, and suggesting solutions.

The group has identified 4 main areas:

- Equity
- Health & Safety
- Assistance
- Market – Food Supply Chain

Issue	Suggestion
<b>EQUITY</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inequitable access to information, both digital (internet access) and language</li> <li>- Insufficient health care coverage including undocumented workers</li> <li>- Public hostility towards farm workers</li> <li>- Unemployed workers are afraid to apply for benefits due to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or think that they are not qualified</li> <li>- Many essential workers are low wage earners and many small businesses have very thin margins.</li> <li>- Need a new working economy – integrating and supporting immigrant communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public announcements should be done in simple plain English so that the information is not lost in translation.</li> <li>- Use faith groups for outreach</li> <li>- Use radio and posters</li> <li>- Add more hotlines with language assistance. Explain the terminology of the documents.</li> <li>- Increase language access across government agencies.</li> <li>- Provide government assistance in hazard pay for farm workers</li> <li>- How to provide health care coverage to the undocumented workers?</li> <li>- Ensure small business grant application in different languages</li> <li>- Radically expand access to internet (distribution of technology tools to unemployed workers).</li> </ul>
<b>HEALTHY &amp; SAFETY</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unclear safety guidelines</li> <li>- Need proper protection for all workers, not just medical. Many essential businesses that expose workers at higher risks include daycare, nursing homes, grocery stores, food distribution workers and farm workers, etc.</li> <li>- Shortage of housing for farm workers to allow sufficient social distancing.</li> <li>- 30,000 H-2A workers arriving for farm activities</li> <li>- Farmers cannot afford to build new housings</li> <li>- Farmers and essential business employers need assistance to implement additional safety measures.</li> <li>- Language barrier brought confusion to information.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- May need Executive Order to help enforce 6-foot rules especially in grocery stores.</li> <li>- Need information clearinghouse that is easy to navigate and multi-lingual</li> <li>- Can the state get housing for farmer workers to help implement proper social distancing or quarantines?</li> <li>- Broadcast the L&amp;I 1-800-423-7233 number to report employers not abiding safety guidelines, and provide assistance to employers to meet safety standards.</li> <li>- Roll out educational public announcements in multi-languages, telling people the importance to maintain physical distance and wear a face mask. Smaller ethnic grocery stores need to be engaged in safety protocols.</li> <li>- The Agricultural and Seasonal Workforce Services Advisory Committee convened to look into the health and safety of the farm workers, managers, and owners involved as a priority. It appears that there are some crossover the work groups.</li> </ul>

#### ASSISTANCE

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unemployment for excluded workers – there are people who are not eligible for federal programs</li> <li>- Lack of access to care for the exposed and symptomatic community</li> <li>- Many unemployed are very worried about losing their shelter.</li> <li>- Those who live in the rural areas rely on having money to buy gas and drive to work. Without work, no gas, no food. They can't even get to the foodbank.</li> <li>- Rural country has difficulties in getting reliable information. Some people spread false information.</li> <li>- Childcare needs additional funding, as many essential workers don't have choice of their work schedule, yet they cannot afford childcare.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can the work group work with a state agency to develop a proposal for excluded workers (ITIN holders, mixed status families, independent contractors)?</li> <li>- State provides assistance for housing, daycare and food.</li> <li>- Can the state's National Guard be mobilized to help distribute food, especially in more rural areas where people may not have the transportation to the foodbank?</li> <li>- Rapid training and deployment of excluded workers into "essential" work and address critical needs.</li> <li>- Need rental assistance for those in-need.</li> <li>- Allocate money to childcare</li> <li>- Rapidly expand broadband in rural areas</li> <li>- State fund giving benefits to undocumented ITIN holders or mixed status families and does not have to report receivers to the federal government.</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

#### MARKET – FOOD SUPPLY CHAIN

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A breakdown in the system: there's shortage in some food banks and schools but farmers are not able to get their produce to those in need.</li> <li>- Small farmers have very thin margins. They can't sell to restaurants or through Farmers Market. Do they just leave their crops rot in the fields?</li> <li>- There are many people who are unemployed and need the food bank's support.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can the state create a network with Commerce and WA State Department of Ag working together to identify the supply and needs? We don't want to waste food. If we do not get the supply chain set-up farmers will not be able to get the food to the people who need it.</li> <li>- Farmers need to be compensated fairly.</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

### Vice-Chair Selection

The work group also selected two Vice-Chairs during this meeting. For the record, the roles & responsibilities of the Vice-Chairs are:

- Participate as a member of the WG
- Deputy for the Chairperson in general meetings as needed
- Participate in at least one of the sub-groups
- Liaise with at least two sub-group champions
- Undertake things delegated by the Chairperson or requested by the WG

Members discussed the need to have equitable representation of workers and employers. Most of those in attendance accepted both Cariño Barragan, United Food and Commercial Workers – Local 21, and Kristin Kershaw Snapp, Washington State Fruit Tree Association to be co-Vice Chairs.

### Next Steps

- Meeting notes will be shared with the work group members by end of day April 6, 2020.
- Work group members will provide comments by April 10, 2020.
- Tammy will submit minutes to Lisa Brown.
- Work Group members are eager and willing to regroup in two weeks for next steps.

## Addendum A

Participating members talked about their top concerns regarding to impact brought by COVID-19.

**Rich Stolz** – A handful of things that are top of mind:

- Federal stimulus provides some relief, but excludes several immigrant population such as ITINs, and mixed status families for some of the benefits established through these programs.
- Unemployment assistance program that would help to fill in gaps that the state could focus on such as independent contractors.
- There are some immigrant community members that are looking to participate that have medical related backgrounds. There are questions about how quickly the state can allow these folks into essential worker categories to provide support to the broader society.
- Ongoing worksite or immigration enforcement during this time? Have had mixed signal and concerns with this, and is causing immigrant communities to have potential fear for applying for benefits. Also related to this is workers' rights.
- The DACA period is a concern related to pursuing people off benefits and work authorizations at this time.

**Bre Elsey** –

- Essential workers does not mean more income. Farmers are concerned about just making payroll.
- We need to keep agriculture whole or we cannot keep Washington working.
- Our market is reliant on agriculture. Farmers are not only providing produce to the market, but are also contributing to food banks. If we cannot sell our produce, then farmers cannot afford labor.
- Restaurants and farmers markets are a large market industry that has taken a large down turn. You need a market, and we are lacking a market.

**Cariño Barragan** –

- Concerned about grocery and stock workers. Have been working with the unions and community partners to track major issues.
- The union is tracking how folks can get funding as they are laid off.

**Alex Galarza** –

- We have been addressing social distancing out in the fields.
- Having been hearing social distancing is an issue at the packing sheds. Not having enough sanitation equipment for farm workers.
- Have been sitting on the H-2A group to make sure they have not been forgotten and are part of the prevention planning. Colleagues are also involved in looking into farmworker housing, and what measures are in place for protecting folks living in this housing.
- Also identifying benefits available for undocumented folks. Concerns about public charge and how this would impact community members.

**Antonio Ginatta** –

- Sent a letter to Inslee about H-2A workers. Want to make sure that these essential workers have measures in place even during harvest to stay safe.
- Farm workers are essential and it should be reflected in benefits.

**Eric Gonzalez** –

- Supporting other organizations that are leading strategies to address independent contractor issues, and supporting allies to address broad issues.

**Karen Lewis –**

- Top of mind are her neighbors who work in packing and processing manufacturing who have no social distancing opportunities within these jobs.
- Social distancing in the field and in farm worker housing. How can we support employers on how to institute these efforts? How can employers mitigate risk and keep farmers economically viable.

**Montserrat Padilla –**

- The work we have been doing is managing a lot of the research of where there may be community funds that folks can access for housing and food.
- Launched hotline assistance for resources and testing and care resources. Received lots of calls on varying needs.
- Have concerns about shelter and food. A priority is looking into housing/rental assistance

**Malou Chavez –**

- Would like to raise attention about conditions in detention centers.
- Messaging around this issue from the Governor would be useful in ensuring that we are keeping up with federal communication and filing deadlines with immigration services.
- Much of this has been a whirlwind due to courts' schedules.
- Concerned about undocumented folks applying for unemployment benefits.
- Important to have more information and language translations available.

**Paul Benz –**

- Priority is the fear of unemployment. Concerned about eviction and housing issues.

**Kristin Kershaw Snapp –**

- Concerned about employees, have implement social distancing at work. They may social distance at work but commute 6-7 employees in one car. Very concerned about ability to harvest crops.
- If we have to quarantine an entire crew, it would be difficult to get crops harvested.
- 30,000 H-2A workers to arrive in a few months. Without healthy workers we will not have food.
- There needs to be total transparency in the food supply chain. No one knows who has what and who needs what. Farmers have no way of knowing if food banks need their product.
- Entire Agricultural supply chain is in crisis. Our state is the number one producer of the top five products food banks all over the United States must have in stock every day. Apples, Potatoes, Onions, dried peas and legumes.

**Sandra Rodarte –**

- Concerns about what the government will be doing about the H-2A workers that will be coming.
- L&I informed provided a number that employees can call with concerns about the virus. They can remain anonymous.

**Alejandro Sanchez -**

- Concerns about the cascading fear of immigration issues related to folks that are working and undocumented.
- Concerns about regulations around worker safety.
- We need to let people you don't need a letter from your employer to work.