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The Disaster Relief for Farm Workers Act

U.S. Senators Michael Bennet (D-Colo.) and Alex Padilla (D-Calif.)
U.S. Representatives Andrea Salinas (D-Ore.) and Zoe Lofgren (D-Calif.)

An estimated 2.4 million farm workers wake up before sunrise every day to work on our nation's family farms and ranches, tend to animals, harvest fruits and vegetables, and feed families across the country. Their work is critical to the United States' economy and food security. Yet climate-related threats including rising temperatures and increasingly severe natural disasters particularly affect farm workers. Additionally, unexpected disasters can strike at any time – exemplified by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite farm workers' contributions, existing federal disaster relief programs insufficiently compensate farm workers when they lose wages as a result of conditions out of their control. The Disaster Relief for Farm Workers Act follows the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Equity Commission's recommendations to provide disaster relief funding for farm workers.

Specifically, the bill makes grants available to eligible organizations to provide emergency relief to farm workers affected by a disaster and ensures USDA develops and executes a promotional plan prior to and throughout the distribution of the relief grants to increase awareness of the assistance available.

This bill acknowledges the critical role farm workers play in our food system and economy by addressing the need for parity in agricultural disaster relief. This legislation would ensure that farm workers receive the necessary support to continue their essential work, even in the face of unforeseen events.

Supportive organizations include Voces Unidas de las Montañas, Earthjustice, United Farm Workers (UFW), UFW Foundation, National Farm Worker Ministry, Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN), the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP), California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, Columbia Legal Services, United Migrant Opportunity Services, and the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA), among others.