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July 21, 2020

To: Genevieve Flores-Haro, MICOP
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Subject: County of Ventura Response to July 2nd MICOP and CAUSE Joint Statement and July 21st Board of Supervisor Meeting Comments

The County of Ventura commends the efforts of MICOP and CAUSE to address the impacts of COVID-19 on Ventura County farmworkers and their families. Farmworkers are vital members of our community that are essential to not only our economy but to providing food for the nation.

Since the very onset of the pandemic the County has worked to stem the spread of COVID-19 in our communities and especially among those who are most vulnerable. As you may recall, the County of Ventura's Public Health Officer did not hesitate to issue a public alert on March 3, 2020 advising the community to practice social distancing well before any community spread that was evidenced locally. This action was meaningful and likely slowed the spread of the virus in our community. Subsequently, on March 12, a Public Health Emergency was declared and since then the County's Public Health Officer has abided by State guidance and orders.

Since these initial reactions to the threat and impact of COVID-19, the Public Health Department and the County of Ventura has been working aggressively to secure needed resources, establish testing sites, provide information and direction. These efforts have included working with the hospital systems to assure that each health system would have the capacity to meet the demands of COVID-19. We believe the swift and extensive response has resulted in an overall lower per capita infection rate as compared to our neighboring counties and many other counties across the state.

Along with the initial and continued response to COVID-19 a comprehensive effort has been made to communicate, educate, provide guidance and secure needed resources so the public can access testing and health care services. Like you, we are aware that COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted some communities at a greater rate than others, including the elderly and the Latino community, including a substantial portion of the farmworker community. Like you, we are very concerned for the well-being and protection of our farmworker community and have focused a significant amount of resources and attention to assure their continued safety.

We provide the following information as a summary of the representative efforts that

have been made in support of the farmworker community in relation to the requests put forth by MICOP and CAUSE advocates at both the July 21, 2020 Board of Supervisors Meeting and also in the July 2, 2020 public letter. While much has been done, we also want to acknowledge that as a system, we embrace continuous improvement and routinely seek opportunities to improve the services we provide.

Responses to Board Comments July 21, 2020

1. Direct the Agricultural Commission to require growers to notify employees (in their native languages) that they are entitled to paid sick time and that they are safe to voice any safety concerns they have with working conditions. Ensure both of these entitlements are free from retaliation from their employer.

The County Farmworker Resource Program (FRP), in partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) began to share with growers information regarding virtual town halls to help employers understand the Families First Response Act (FFCRA) that was signed into law on March 18, 2020, requiring employers to provide employees with paid sick or family leave for specific reasons related to COVID19.

FRP and DOL, hosted virtual townhalls that were created specifically for Ventura County organizations in the agriculture community. The first one took place on April 30 (English) and a second one on May 5 (Spanish). Both townhalls meetings had local growers and labor contractor's participation, had their questions answered, and helped them understand the laws that protect farmworkers. DOL has made a commitment with FRP to continue these townhalls for as long as needed.

2. Have Public Health authorities inspect guest worker housing to ensure safe environments and ensure access to healthcare.

Public Health is reviewing inspection programs with County Resource Management Agency Code Enforcement, the City/County Business Ambassador Program, FRP, County Agricultural Commissioner as well as with our partners in the State and Federal Regulatory organizations having oversight for H2A programs and operators.

3. Create a field sanitation inspection program and pass a health order that makes the new Cal OSHA COVID safety guidance enforceable law.

State law requires field toilets to be supplied with decontamination materials including water, soap and single use towels. The Agricultural Commissioner's Office has for many years been performing random inspections of field worker

bathroom facilities as part of their regular safety checks associated with pesticide regulation.

The County Public Health Officer's May 7th Order required all businesses that are open in the County to register and attest that they are following the industry COVID-19 prevention guidance published by the California State Department of Public Health and to post their plan at their worksite, including a hotline number that may be contacted by workers or members of the public to report non-compliance. The County established a business ambassador program to inspect and verify that local businesses are following the required state guidance documents. There are specific agricultural industry guidance documents and transportation guidance documents that apply to agricultural environments.

In support of COVID-19 safety compliance the Agriculture Commissioner has sent correspondence in both English and Spanish to 2,500 agriculture industry operators and partners regarding mandatory registration on vcreopens.

4. Have Public health authorities require employers to regularly test and screen employees for COVID-19.

No cost Viral or PCR testing has been broadly established. The County has gone beyond the state standards to provide testing at 13 locations including 5 different locations in Oxnard and Santa Paula and four high volume drive-through testing sites in Santa Paula, Oxnard, Moorpark and Ventura. Hours of service have been extended to evenings and weekends to provide expanded availability to farmworkers. The County has also established a pop-up testing program that is providing free local walk-up testing services in outlying communities where many agricultural workers and their families reside. Six walkup testing events are scheduled in Piru, Fillmore and Ojai over the next two weeks. To date these facilities have conducted over 90,000 COVID-19 tests at no cost to the patients.

While the County does support as much testing as possible and has made free testing available county-wide, given the limited number of tests available worldwide we recommend that the priority for testing be given to symptomatic or individuals having been exposed to COVID positive persons which is consistent with the just released guidance on testing priority released by the California Department of Public Health.

County Public Health contact tracing and rapid response team efforts have provided testing at packing houses, farmworker housing sites and agriculture facilities supporting quick containment when there is any sign of an outbreak at a facility.

Responses to July 2, 2020 MICOP/CAUSE Letter

Educate farmworkers on the additional sick leave they can receive if they contract the coronavirus and how they can access health care by sending a letter to all farmworkers and by doing direct outreach to farms.

The FRP and Agriculture Commissioner collaborated to distribute over 130,000 flyers to be included with farmworker paychecks and farm visits, these flyers included information regarding:

- Health Care Agency waiving office visit fees and costs related to respiratory and COVID visits.
- Free COVID test locations
- HCA medical temporary housing at Room Key hotels for farmworkers unable to isolate or quarantine at home.
- HCA Behavioral Health's Logrando Bienestar program offering mental health services for Latino and indigenous residents

The FRP is a neutral resource center that does not have any enforcement authority and is not a rights advocacy program. The FRP has worked diligently to inform farmworkers that they are able to contact the FRP at any time should they need assistance. In support of farmworkers the FRP, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) began to share with growers information regarding virtual town halls to help employers understand the Families First Response Act (FFCRA) that was signed into law on March 18, 2020, requiring employers to provide employees with paid sick or family leave for specific reasons related to COVID19.

FRP and DOL, hosted virtual townhalls that were created specifically for Ventura County organizations in the agriculture community. The first one took place on April 30 (English) and a second one on May 5 (Spanish). Both townhall meetings had local growers and labor contractor participation where their questions were answered, and information was provided to aide with understanding of laws protecting farmworkers. DOL has made a commitment with FRP to continue these townhalls for as long as needed.

Develop an inspection program for farms to ensure that there are clean bathrooms and farmworkers have access to water, soap and hand sanitizer.

State law requires field toilets to be supplied with decontamination materials including water, soap and single use towels. The Agricultural Commissioner's Office has for many

years been performing random inspections of field worker bathroom facilities as part of their regular safety checks associated with pesticide regulation.

In addition, the County Public Health Officer's May 7th Order required all businesses that are open in the County to register and attest that they are following the industry COVID-19 prevention guidance published by the California State Department of Public Health and to post their plan at their worksite, including a hotline number that may be contacted by workers or members of the public to report non-compliance. The County established a business ambassador program to inspect and verify that local businesses are following the required state guidance documents. There are specific agricultural industry guidance documents and transportation guidance documents that apply to agricultural environments.

Direct the Ventura County Farmworker Resource Program to actively inform farmworkers of their health, labor and safety rights including on COVID-19 and to address complaints on health and safety.

FRP extended hours of operation from 9:00am to 7:00pm daily, to ensure farmworkers are able to connect directly with team members and receive the assistance needed (as a result of numerous organizations and groups closing their doors during this pandemic, that caused additional strain on our farmworkers and their families).

With the support of the Agriculture Commissioner (AC) and HSA, the program added 3 trilingual staff members to help with COVID related outreach and assistance.

FRP, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) began to share with growers information regarding virtual town halls to help employers understand the Families First Response Act (FFCRA) that was signed into law on March 18, 2020, requiring employers to provide employees with paid sick or family leave for specific reasons related to COVID19.

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As part of its ongoing services, the FRP provides support to our farmworker community assisting with concerns regarding retaliation from employers as a result of reporting workplace health and safety issues.

The FRP has worked diligently to inform farmworkers that they are able to contact the FRP at any time should they need assistance. The FRP facilitates conversations with employers to come to a resolution. If a resolution is not possible, the FRP helps connect workers with other available resources. FRP ensures follow up until a resolution is completed.

FRP is a neutral resource center that does not have any enforcement authority and is not a rights advocacy program.

Develop a plan for emergencies such as wildfires to ensure that employers are providing their outdoor workers with N95 masks to protect them from smoke as required by state law.

Wildfire Distribution

FRP and the County Executive Office distributed over 17,000 N95 masks and provided both verbal and printed instructions in Spanish and English countywide during recent wildfires to local organizations/partners including MICOP, CAUSE, Lideres Campesinas, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Santa Paula and One Step a la Vez.

Agriculture Commissioner Offices in Santa Paula and Camarillo were designated distribution sites for N95 masks. Staff worked with growers to distribute directly to employees.

COVID-19 Mask Distribution

During the COVID19 Pandemic, the Agriculture Commissioner's Office has been distributing surgical masks to growers to be distributed to their farmworkers. FRP partnered with the Ag Commissioner for distribution and has received hundreds of donated face masks that are being distributed to growers on-site at the ranches. Over 1,000,000 masks have been made available.

Ensure all written and verbal outreach is conducted to Indigenous and Spanish Speaking farmworker families in a way that is linguistically and culturally appropriate.

Beginning with the first COVID press conference held on February 26, 2020 at the Freedom Center in Camarillo, COVID information was immediately recorded with a voice over in Spanish, Mixteco, Purepecha and Zapoteco.

FRP team creation tailored COVID and resource outreach for farmworkers including in Spanish and Mixteco various informative videos and voice over, social media,

weekly/monthly live radio shows on 94.1 Radio Indigena, PSA's, WhatsApp messages on the following topics:

- Stay At Home Orders
- How to protect yourself from COVID19 and social distancing
- COVID prevention and symptoms, how to wear a mask
- Mental Health Services - Logrando Bienestar
- COVID19 testing locations
- price gauging,
- daily COVID19 number updates
- Agriculture Essential Worker Identification card
- partnered with the Sherriff's Office for the identification card to be used safe and without fear,
- partnered with Dr. Andrade information regarding COVID19 questions or Medical attention related to COVID19
- some videos, in partnership with MICOP were developed in Purepecha and Zapoteco

The Farmworker Resource Program along with VCMC county doctors visit local farms to share important COVID protection and follow up, available resources and answer questions.

Create materials for outreach that de-stigmatize what a positive diagnosis means for farmworkers, including information on paid sick leave available to them.

As indicated above, the FRP early on provided communication concerning COVID-19, including health and wellness information and guidance encouraging farmworkers to seek care and support that is being offered. The FRP and Agricultural Commissioner continue to provide outreach across many different channels and in multiple farmworker relevant languages to help reduce fear and stigma and encourage care and support.

Ensure that workers who test positive for the coronavirus have access to social programs for food, peer support, and mental health services.

The County has funded \$855,00 for expanded Food Share services in targeted locations to be more accessible to farmworker communities with extended hours designed to facilitate availability and access. The locations, hours and access has been communicated widely through trusted channels via the Farmworker Resource Program and community partners.

Through its Communicable Disease Services Program, Public Health has been providing support for isolation and quarantine in hotels to any community member who is unable to safely isolate or quarantine at home. The County quickly acted to establish 4 hotel sites throughout the County with capacity to provide services to vulnerable, at risk individuals.

Behavioral Health's Logrando Bienestar Program (LB) has been provided mental health services for Latino and indigenous communities. In November 2019, LB was expanded to serve communities in South Oxnard, Pt. Hueneme, Santa Clara Valley and Ventura Avenue in the city of Ventura. FRP and LB have been working together since 2019 to strengthen outreach to farmworkers. During COVID, LB and FRP have coordinated joint messaging efforts which include LB staff joining Backpack Medicine and FRP at farm visits, online forums discussing mental health and stress to families during COVID, social media content, flyer information at food distributions, and on FRP farmworker paycheck to connect farmworkers to services at LB.

BH and MHSa funding have funded MICOP's Healing the Soul program using indigenous practices to help indigenous communities with stress, anxiety and depression. Additionally, BH's Cultural Equity Advisory Committee has two MICOP representatives that provide feedback making recommendations for mental health services.

Provide mobile COVID-19 testing sites at agriculture work sites.

Public Health contact tracing and rapid response efforts have and continue to provide testing at packing houses and agriculture facilities supporting quick containment when there is any sign of an outbreak at a facility.

The County has also established a pop-up testing program that is providing free local walk-up testing services in outlying communities where many agricultural workers and their families reside. Six walkup testing events are scheduled in Piru, Fillmore and Ojai over the next two weeks. This testing is in addition to the 13 County testing locations across the County.

Passing a policy to increase the amount of shade so that workers can socially distance during breaks.

The Agricultural Commissioner's Office has distributed an advisory to all agricultural producers in the County directing that shade be increased to support safe social distancing by farmworkers. The Advisory for Agricultural Worker Protection was written in collaboration with a number of different county agencies, farm operations and farmworker advocacy groups including MICOP and CAUSE.

Encouraging H2A housing near services in cities not in county unincorporated, rural, and isolated areas.

The SOAR initiative brought forth and approved by voters in Ventura County, combined with the County general plan and local city plans provide for and require housing development in cities and their adjacent spheres of influence where vacant, non-agricultural land may be located that is authorized for building. The County has supported farmworker housing projects in Ventura, Oxnard, Santa Paula and Piru.

Discouraging H2A housing that does not allow workers to socially distance. Plan to minimize exposure of workers by treating those that share a room as a household that eats meals together, are transported together and work in the same area.

The County continues to provide education and guidance to growers on how to minimize COVID-19 exposure to farmworkers via the FRP and business ambassadors program and all of the aforementioned outreach efforts.

Discouraging H2A housing that has more than 20 workers concentrated at one site.

Affordable housing for farmworkers is a priority and the pre-approved farmworker housing plans established by the County help to promote individual family housing.

Committing to allowing local agencies/organizations to access and present to H2A workers.

This is not within the authority of the County to authorize or mandate of businesses.

Directing Public Health to investigate all H2A worker housing to assess if the proper health and safety precautions are being implemented including the proximity in which workers are being housed, how workers are transported together, and if workers have regular access to soap, disinfectant, and masks at their housing.

Public Health is reviewing inspection programs with County Resource Management Agency Code Enforcement, the City/County Business Ambassador Program, FRP, County Agricultural Commissioner as well as with our partners in the State and Federal Regulatory organizations having oversight for H2A programs and operators.

Passing a policy that requires agricultural employers to increase the amount of shade provided to workers so that workers can socially distance during breaks.

The Agricultural Commissioner's Office, Growers, farmworker advocate groups, FRP and other County agencies created the Ventura County Agriculture Advisory. The advisory includes guidance that shade be increased to support safe social distancing by farmworkers. The advisory was distributed by the Agricultural Commissioner's Office to all agricultural producers in the County.

Summary

Thank you for continuing to advocate and participate in the efforts to expand support for the farmworker community. As important residents of our County, we work hard to ensure that farmworkers are supported, and that County services are inclusive of all our Spanish and indigenous language speaking populations. We look forward to our continued work together to support farmworkers for the duration of the COVID-19 response efforts and beyond.

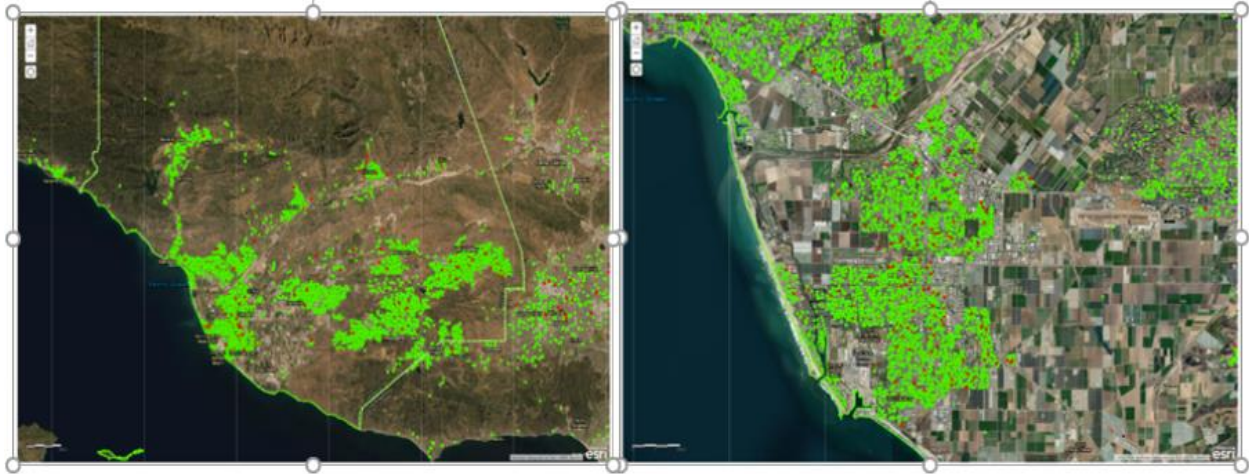
c: Kelly Long, District 3 Supervisor, Chair
Steve Bennett, District 1 Supervisor
Linda Parks, District 2 Supervisor
Bob Huber, District 4 Supervisor
John Zaragoza, District 5 Supervisor
VC Star Reporter, Warren Barrett
El Latino

Vida Newspaper
Peggy Kelly, Santa Paula Times
City Council Members of Oxnard, Port Hueneme, Camarillo Santa Paula, Fillmore
and Ventura
Luis Treto, Telemundo
Andrea Castillo, Los Angeles Times

Attachments: Map Expanded Testing

Farmworker Outreach Efforts July 21st Board of Supervisors Slides

PCR Viral Testing Coverage



Farmworker Outreach

FRP leverages a trusted network of resources and has been a key interface for the Public Health Department in responding to COVID-19 and the farmworker community. FRP staff speak Mixteco, Spanish and English

Outreach and Communication

- COVID and resource outreach for farmworkers in Mixteco and Spanish in various informative videos and voice over, social media, weekly/monthly live radio shows on 94.1 Radio Indígena, PSA's via WhatsApp messages
- Farm visits with VCMC doctor program providing COVID education and resource outreach to farmworkers
- Mental Health Services – Logrando Bienestar
- HCA – waiving office visit fees and costs related to respiratory and COVID visits
- Free high volume COVID testing locations with expanded hours
- Collaborated in Advisory for Agriculture Worker Protection During COVID-19
- Food Share Pop Up distribution event locations
- HSA Emergency Rental Assistance Program

Farmworker Outreach

- Ongoing Work with Public Health, Ag Commissioner to outreach & share information and resources related to COVID19
- Continuing farmworker education on-site at ranches to educate farmworkers on COVID19 testing, prevention & follow up
- Updated Agricultural Advisory
 - Worked with Dr. Levin to include a new Employer-Provided Housing segment in the Agricultural Advisory sent to all ag producers
 - Dr. Levin and Ed Williams (Ag Commissioner) recorded an informational video
- Partnered with the Employment Development Department and U.S. Department of Labor –
 - provided training and education webinars for employers regarding the Families First Response Act.
- Agriculture Commissioner has over 1,000,000 masks and is distributing to growers to support ongoing safety
- FRP distributed over 10,000 disposable face masks and over 700 cloth face masks at farms
- Over 3 months FRP has been visiting different ranches to share resources, information, face masks and food donations
- Leveraging resources with local partners to provide outreach in Fillmore, Santa Paula and South Oxnard
- 90,000 COVID safety flyers; 40,000 flyers distributed to AG/CBOs on face mask and testing site availability

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