

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 7, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-220, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Schumer:

As both chambers work on additional stimulus measures to mitigate the severe disruption caused by COVID-19, we write to ask you to continue to prioritize critically needed funding and resources for our nation's agricultural workers so that they have access to the care they need during this pandemic, including taking further measures to fund educational outreach.

The Latino population, including those in farmworker communities, have accounted for a disproportionate share of COVID-19 cases. We have both been active on this issue. Rep. Cox has introduced two bills, both of which call on the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), to fund public and private awareness campaigns to spread factual information about the COVID-19 pandemic. Rep. Panetta led 72 members of Congress in calling on House leadership to provide or direct the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide funds to protect farmworkers and their children. Rep. Cox and Rep. Panetta also sent joint letters to National Institute of Health Director Francis Collins and Governor Newsom, requesting that funding prioritization be given to research on how COVID-19 has affected essential workers in the food industry, especially farmworkers, farmers, and employees of food processing plants. Now, this research has yielded findings.

Recently, a University of California, Berkeley white paper¹ (published Wednesday, Dec. 2), detailed the outcomes from the first long-term study on the prevalence of, and the risk factors for, COVID-19 infection among California's agricultural laborers. From mid-July to November 2020, 13% of the 1,091 farmworkers enrolled in the study tested positive for COVID-19. This is 8% higher than California's population as a whole. Further, antibody results from farmworkers who tested negative for active infection revealed that antibody was 19.4% by October. Concerningly, more than half (57%; 170/296) of the farmworkers who reported experiencing symptoms associated with COVID 19 and 58% (47/81) who had symptoms and later diagnosed with COVID-19 worked when they had those

¹ [UCB CSVS white paper 12_01_20_final \(berkeley.edu\)](https://www.berkeley.edu/ucb-csvs-white-paper-12-01-20-final)

symptoms. We wanted to bring to your attention the study's findings and the need for funding so that community-based organizations can carry out this work.

Given these findings, it's critical that any end of year package should include:

- **Providing funding for a culturally- and linguistically-appropriate education campaign for farmworkers.** In particular, grants to states and NGOs should ensure that training and education are suitable for all farmworkers, most of whom do not speak English as their first language. Grants should also emphasize the importance of educating farmworkers on staying home from work when sick and combatting any misunderstanding of testing/vaccination and mistrust of the government.
- **Provide free COVID-19 testing for farmworkers.** Grants to states and NGOs should also emphasize rapid and convenient PCR testing and immediate and culturally- and linguistically-appropriate contact tracing, so that farmworkers do not return sick to work due to lack of testing results.
- **Provide Personal Protective Equipment to farmworkers.** In particular, grants to states and NGOs should ensure that farmers have adequate protections, including masks and handwashing stations.

The continued safety, health, and well-being of everyone in the United States, especially those living in rural areas, depends on an effective response that funds on evidence-based solutions. Federal leadership must continue to use the most up-to-date research to help rural providers, community-based organizations, and state and local authorities combat the spread of COVID-19. These are some of our nation's most vulnerable communities and this is an unprecedented public health crisis.

We appreciate your attention to this urgent matter and stand ready to work with you to accomplish these goals. Please do not hesitate to contact our offices if we can answer any questions.

Sincerely,



TJ COX
Member of Congress



JIMMY PANETTA
Member of Congress



JIM COSTA
Member of Congress