



Assembly Bill 93 (Garcia/Rivas) Sense of the Legislature that Vaccines and Testing for Food & Agricultural Employees Should be Prioritized

BACKGROUND

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, California agricultural employers have worked to provide safe places for their employees to work, to comply with constantly-shifting guidance and regulatory requirements, to bear extraordinary financial burdens while their incomes have slumped, and to try to organize worksite- and community-based vaccination clinics in cooperation with local county departments of public health. These efforts have been hampered by shifting mandates from the state government about vaccine distribution and management of intake of vaccination candidates from local departments of public health to a centralized intake system that may not be readily available or easily useable by agricultural production and food production employees

ACTION

PLEASE SUPPORT ASSEMBLY BILL 93 (GARCIA & RIVAS) STATING THE SENSE OF THE LEGISLATURE THAT FOOD AND AGRICULTURE EMPLOYEES SHOULD OCCUPY TOP PRIORITY TO RECEIVE COVID-19 VACCINES AND TESTING.

TALKING POINTS

- California's agricultural employers have worked since the beginning of the pandemic to protect their employees by reorganizing work flow and worksites, educating their employees about COVID-19 and how to protect themselves.
- Agricultural employers have also struggled to comply with shifting guidance and mandates from agencies like Cal/OSHA and the COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS), the California Department of Public Health and local public health agencies.
- In spite of their largely successful efforts to protect their employees (as evidenced by high rates of community spread and low incidence of workplace infections) California agricultural employers continue to bear the extraordinary burdens of COVID-19 workplace protection, paid sick leave, and other costs even as they suffer ongoing reductions in farm income.
- California agricultural employers' efforts to organize worksite- and community-based vaccination events were largely successful on February, but are endangered by recent changes in the state government vaccination candidate intake system imposed through Blue Cross in March.
- This new candidate intake system requires those seeking vaccines to use an on-line system that is difficult to use and may largely preclude the community- and worksite-based vaccine events that were so successful when vaccines first became available for vaccine candidates other than emergency services and medical providers.
- Support for AB 93 may help policymakers re-focus on efforts to ease access for agricultural and food employees rather than centralizing the organization of vaccine distribution.

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