



# AWWC Update

10/13/2021

PROTECTING, MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF ALL MINNESOTANS

## AWWC Committee Updates

- Meet twice monthly meetings through Dec 1.
  - Work groups meeting in between
- Phase 1: Determining scope of work
  - Completed August 1, 2021
- ➔ Phase 2: Defining recommendations
- Phase 3: Drafting recommendations memo

# AWWC Recommendations Timeline



# Migrant Worker Consortium Input

## Survey Results – 15 responses from Consortium members:

- *Lack of adequate housing*
  - far from work, not affordable, difficult to get short-term leases
- *Poor quality of existing housing*
  - Substandard, some unsafe conditions

*“Migratory agricultural workers often only need temporary housing and it can be hard for them to find something affordable and available in area that is near their workplace. When housing is not found, often workers and their families must find someone to live with or stay in a motel, which is expensive due to a daily charge.”*

# Migrant Consortium Input cont.

- *Dangerous working conditions*
  - Long hours, lack of protections from hazards
- *Barriers to healthcare*
  - No insurance, lack of transportation, communication barriers
- *Poor compensation*
  - Low wages, wage theft, not safe to complain

*“These ag workers have experienced numerous times unpaid wages, no holiday pay-nor sick pay-nor vacation pay, no lunch breaks-bathroom breaks, no immediate medical attention even though it was a severe accident/work injury, no assistance for completing medical injury report, severe work harassment/retaliation against the worker after any injury or accident has occurred and mandatory working 12 hour shifts with the straight 7 days working which has severing increase injuries/accidents.”*

# Housing Workgroup – Initial Ideas

- Possibility of funds/grants focused on employer-provided safety improvements in housing
- Targeted housing finance to rural MN areas with large ag worker presence for affordability/availability that is not employer owned
- Better documentation of where housing exists (employer owned)
- What regulations can we put on housing to make it better and what agency does that belong under?
- Centralized complaint system that can route complaints to the regulating agency
- Database of agricultural worker housing inspections across enterprise
- Chart that describes jurisdictions and authorities for housing oversight

# Workplace Safety Workgroup – Initial Ideas

- *Develop posters and other materials with information about workplace safety, worker rights, and where to get help written in ALL languages spoken by agricultural and food processing workers in MN.*
  - Require employers to use these new resources
  - Require employers to help pay for these new resources
- *Provide DLI with more funding and staffing to do the following:*
  - Increase the number of proactive inspections of agricultural and food processing worksites
  - Reduce the amount of time it takes to process OSHA complaints
- *Identify which subsectors of the agriculture and food processing industries have the worst safety violations and develop a new OSHA “emphasis program” for them*
- *Update penalties for employers with MNOSHA safety violations to at least the federal penalty level, or higher*
- *Borrow successful workplace safety initiatives from the construction industry, such as leveraging employer relationships and competition, as well as rewards and recognition for workplace safety achievements*
- *Develop formal partnerships between state agencies and advocacy groups (e.g. unions, nonprofits, etc.) to continue to find ways to support workers who aren’t reporting workplace safety issues*

# Fair Labor Standards Workgroup – Initial Ideas

- Broaden who has authority to enforce this statutory scheme
  - Discussed that Labor Standards can use wage theft law to enforce almost entire statutory scheme
- Make sure Migrant Labor Law reflects/aligns with wage theft law
- Broaden group of workers law's protections apply to
- Increase penalties for noncompliance
- Increase employee and employer awareness
- Clarify agency authority to enforce



1. What do you think of the priorities the workgroups have identified?
2. What would you add?



## AWWC Website and Resources

- AWWC workplan: [https://mn.gov/deed/assets/awwc-workplan-draft\\_tcm1045-489913.docx](https://mn.gov/deed/assets/awwc-workplan-draft_tcm1045-489913.docx)
- AWWC website: [Governor's Committee on the Safety, Health, and Wellbeing of Agricultural and Food Processing Workers / Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development \(mn.gov\)](#)

# Thank you!

AWWC members