



## Meeting Minutes: Governor's Committee on the Safety, Health, and Wellbeing of Agricultural and Food Processing Workers

**DATE: 1/09/2022**

**MINUTES PREPARED BY: CINTHIA MARTINEZ**

Attendance

### Committee Members

#### Present

**Erik Zabel**, Epidemiologist Principal, Minnesota Department of Health

**Elise Sporre**, Project Manager and Outreach Coordinator, Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services

**Lorrie Janatopoulos**, CareerForce Director, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

**Tamara Nelsen**, Executive Director, Minnesota AgriGrowth Council

**Sarah Berry**, Public Health Director, Waseca County | CHS Administrator, Le Sueur – Waseca Community Health Board

**Patrice Bailey**, Assistant Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Agriculture

**Kiza Olson**, CHS Administrator, Meeker-McLeod-Sibley Community Health Services

**Rodolfo Gutierrez**, Executive Director, HACER

#### Absent

**Dan Glessing**, President, Minnesota Farm Bureau

**Emilia Gonzalez Avalos**, Executive Director, Unidos MN

**Gary Wertish**, President, Minnesota Farmers Union

**Jim Gleb**, President, United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1189

**Nicole Blissenbach**, Deputy Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry

**Rena Wong**, Director of Organizing, United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 663

**Stephanie Low**, Interim Executive Director/ Chief Medical Officer, Community Health Service Inc.

**Guests:** Lidibette Guzman, State Monitor Advocate, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development; Noemi Trevino, Migrant Education, Minnesota Department of Education

**Staff Present:** Cinthia Martinez, CareerForce Office Coordinator, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development; Jessica Grosz, Director of Labor Standards and Apprenticeship, Minnesota Department of Labor, and Industry; Valerie Gamble, State Program Admin Principal, Minnesota Department of Agriculture

#### Agenda

1:00 PM **Welcome / Introductions**

1:02 PM **Approve Minutes & Agenda**

1:05 PM **Housing Subcommittee Update**

1:10 PM **Employer Subcommittee Update**

1:20 PM **Update on Migrant Services Consortium**

1:35 PM **AWWC input regarding Committee work for the upcoming year**

1:50 PM **Public Comments**

2:00 PM **Adjourn**

## Meeting notes

### Welcome/ Introductions

### Approve Minutes & Agenda

Approved.

### Housing Subcommittee Update

In the last month, members of the Housing work group have met with a couple of state agencies. Meeting with DHS staff and staff from the Office of Economic Opportunity at the end of 2022 resulted in some action items, including making connections. In addition, we met with the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency last week, which resulted in a to-do list and discussion of collaboration in future proposals.

Another item in the works is identifying the agencies and direct service providers who can receive housing complaints from agricultural workers. To help the housing work group, OSHA, MDH, and DEED at the beginning of December to clarify jurisdiction. There wasn't too much overlap, so a robust spreadsheet was created to break down scenarios. There are several situations that are not as straightforward for workers. Therefore, it is recommended that AWP continue to fill housing complaint calls and continue to make that clear to folks. AWP will refer them to the best place, and work with community providers.

### Employer Subcommittee Update

As previously mentioned, there was an employer listening forum held in November that included agriculture employers from Bushel Boyed, Seneca, and Midwest Food Processing association. Their input and participation are greatly appreciated, but we identified the need for more input from state employers, so we sent out a survey. The most noteworthy feature of each of them was that every one of them provided housing for migrant seasonal farm workers. All of them stated they knew of the standards, and they all answered differently when asked who oversees them. Additionally, the employers expressed that they provided good housing, but did not receive compensation for the damages. Employers also expressed a lack of support in this area.

Valerie Gamble will put the responses together and they will be sent out to the rest of the Committee members.

### Update on Migrant Services Consortium

The Executive Order that created this committee stated that we work with the Migrant Services Consortium. The purpose of it this group is to work together as government and community agencies to share information and provide the best services that directly impact migratory agricultural workers, to strengthen statewide partnerships in a transparent manner that allows for cohesive service delivery across agencies. This group includes workers who are at the frontlines who provide services to the workers. It also includes Comunidad Latinas Unidas en Servicio, Community Health Services, Department of Chicano studies, HACER, Hungers solutions, the Latino Economic Development Centers, Motivation Education and Training, and Midwest migrant resource center, Minnesota council of Latino Affairs, and several state agencies. We have a broad representation of government agencies and community organizations that work with ag workers, whether its education, health, employment, housing, food, tech, so we see that the consortium can be a vital player in trying to resolve some of these issues that

they are directly impacted by working together to make a change. The Consortium members meet once a month, the third Wednesday of the month for from 9-10am.

### [AWWC input regarding Committee Work for the upcoming year](#)

We will be moving forward with the recommendation regarding the codification of this committee in the statute.

According to committee member Patrice Bailey, this committee has some big advocates in the house and senate addressing the issues put forth last year.

Jessica Grosz of the DLI mentioned that the same bill introduced last year to improve working and housing conditions for agricultural workers was also introduced this year.

### [Public Comments](#)

None.

### [Adjourn](#)