

California Legislature



May 18, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
California State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

We are writing to express our gratitude for working to establish a fund to help support undocumented workers displaced by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to respectfully request increased support this population, which continues to be in great need.

We are grateful for the foresight and leadership you have taken to establish Disaster Relief Assistance for immigrant workers. Because of your efforts, California is yet again the first State in the nation to provide life-sustaining support for immigrant workers. The COVID-19 pandemic is a bellwether moment for California, in large part because of the work you are doing. Your work and leadership is needed and welcome.

Yet, we need to, and we must do more. We need to continue to work together to address the void created by the lack of action by the federal administration that has left our undocumented worker population in the cold; without any semblance of support or gratitude for the work they do on a daily basis. This is why we are writing to respectfully request increased support for our undocumented worker population with the establishment of a temporary partial income replacement program for excluded workers who are not eligible for the state or federal benefits.

The safety and well-being of all Californians through the COVID-19 pandemic depends on a strong safety net that allows all of us to shelter in place. Undocumented workers make up one in 10 workers in our diverse state and are the backbone of our shared prosperity in some of California's most important industries - hospitality, domestic service, and food service, among others - which have experienced the highest rates of unemployment during the pandemic. The impact of this job loss threatens the livelihoods of millions more Californians in addition to the unemployed workers themselves; according to the California Budget and Policy Center, an estimated one in three undocumented residents is a parent and more than one in eight school-aged children in California may have a parent who is an undocumented immigrant.

To address the urgent and fundamental need of undocumented workers, we propose the creation of a temporary, partial income replacement program for excluded workers who are not eligible for the state or federal benefits administered by EDD and who are unemployed or underemployed as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We estimate the total number of

individuals who would access this program to be approximately 216,499.¹ We propose providing a \$400 flat weekly benefit amount for a maximum of 8 weeks for individuals unemployed or underemployed between March 29, 2020 and July 25, 2020. While this is far less than what other workers are currently eligible for through unemployment insurance and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, we believe it will provide a base level of support towards ensuring that undocumented and mixed status families can survive this pandemic and rebuild their lives.

This pandemic has revealed the essential importance of immigrant workers who grow and prepare our food, build and maintain our homes, and care for our loved ones. California must demonstrate that we value these workers enough for their families to survive during a crisis where we all depend on each other.

This is not the first time that the federal government's exclusion of undocumented workers has shifted the brunt of a crisis onto them, and with growing wildfires across the West and pandemics forecast to increase in frequency, it will not be the last time. If California leaves this hole in our safety net for such a large part of our communities, we leave ourselves exposed to similar or worsening devastation in future crises. We must emerge stronger and establish policy to buffer these impacts going forward. In the long term, we ask that the Labor and Workforce Development Agency work in consultation with the Legislature and key stakeholders to develop a permanent framework to provide income replacement for excluded workers facing full or partial unemployment beyond this pandemic.

If California does not move decisively to create a safety net for all, we deepen the hole out of which families must climb. Lessons from the last recession show that direct support to our communities is the shortest path to a true recovery: families with roofs over their heads, able to put food on their tables, and forming the vibrant communities that make California the powerhouse and home that makes us all proud.

Again, we greatly appreciate your leadership on this issue and are thankful for your consideration of this request. If you have questions or need more information about this proposal, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We stand in solidarity with you in the effort to support and protect ALL Californians.

Sincerely,

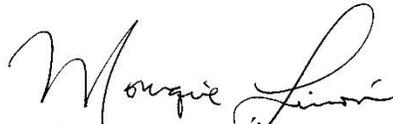


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27th Assembly District



MARIA ELENA DURAZO
28th Senate District

¹ The total number of employed undocumented workers in California prior to the coronavirus crisis was estimated to be 1,485,825. Based on state and national unemployment and underemployment statistics, we estimate that the total number of undocumented Californians eligible for this program would be 481,108, and that approximately 45% of those eligible would participate.



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