

Katherine Douglas

General  
Public Comment - Group 1



**From:** Kathryn O'Loughlin <sbsdkstaff@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 11, 2024 10:28 AM  
**To:** Joan Hartmann  
**Cc:** sbcob  
**Subject:** Support a Farmworker Living Wage!

**Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.**

Dear Supervisor Hartmann,

As we approach the Thanksgiving season, a time for reflection and gratitude, I am sending this email to express my deep concern regarding the urgent need for a living wage for the hardworking farmworkers in our community. As you are well aware, farmworkers do some of the most dangerous and essential jobs in our community, yet agricultural corporations are not paying their workers enough to afford basic needs like rent, groceries, and childcare, despite their invaluable contributions.

Santa Barbara County agriculture is a nearly \$2 billion industry that continues to bring in record revenues by exporting products across the globe. It is disheartening to realize that while these agricultural corporations profit immensely, the very farmworkers who contribute to such a successful industry are only paid 20-30 cents to harvest grapes by hand for each bottle of expensive wine sipped by tourists in our scenic and world-renowned wine country.

This month, you held a hearing at which we witnessed hundreds of farmworkers show their support for a \$26 minimum wage and heard hours of testimonies highlighting the immense struggles faced by their families. Their voices must not be ignored. It would be unconscionable to let their cries for justice go unanswered, especially at a time when we are meant to give thanks for all we have.

You have the opportunity to take a bold, decisive action that will change lives and elevate those who have long been overlooked. Anything less than supporting a living wage for farmworkers would be a betrayal of their dignity and contributions to our community.

Please listen to the voices of farmworkers and support real solutions proposed by farmworkers themselves, not small gestures proposed by industry that only tinker at the margins of poverty and inequality. We urge you to directly tackle the root cause of our community's suffering: raise farmworker wages now!

## Katherine Douglas

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**From:** Natalia Candelaria Gonzalez <natalcg1@uci.edu>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 11, 2024 10:44 AM  
**To:** Joan Hartmann  
**Cc:** sbcob  
**Subject:** Support a Farmworker Living Wage!

**Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.**

Dear Supervisor Hartmann,

My name is Natalia González, and I am a Ph.D. candidate and National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellow at the University of California, Irvine. I was born and raised in Santa Maria by a family of farmworkers and educators. Their stories of working in the fields and their struggles have inspired my academic success and current research, where I examine the life trajectories of farmworker youth from Santa Maria. I spent the last summer and fall conducting interviews with former farmworker youth in Santa Maria and heard many stories about the struggles they endured in the fields to help their parents make ends meet. As I shared, I grew up listening to stories of struggles endured by family members, so many of these themes were not new to me. Still, the stories I heard while researching struck me immensely because these struggles have spanned generations. Upon analyzing my interview transcripts, the finding that remains clearest to me is that many of these individuals would not have been exposed to the many perils of the fields at young ages had their parents and guardians been earning a livable wage that didn't necessitate additional income to make ends meet. **The fault of this continued practice does not fall onto farmworking parents and guardians fighting to give their families better lives but rather on the agricultural industry, which pays poverty wages for back-breaking work and the legal institutions that uphold this pay.**

As we continue in the holiday season, I urge you to take the time to reflect upon the lived realities of your farmworking constituents. I am sending this email to express my deep concern regarding the urgent need for a living wage for the hardworking farmworkers in our community. As you know, farmworkers do some of our country's most dangerous and essential jobs. Despite their invaluable contributions, agricultural corporations are not paying their workers enough to afford basic needs like rent, groceries, and childcare.

Santa Barbara County agriculture is a nearly \$2 billion industry that continues to bring in record revenues by exporting products globally. It is disheartening to realize that while these agricultural corporations profit immensely, the very farmworkers who contribute to such a successful industry are only paid 20-30 cents to harvest grapes by hand for each bottle of expensive wine sipped by tourists in our scenic and world-renowned wine country.

Last month, you held a hearing at which we witnessed hundreds of farmworkers show their support for a \$26 minimum wage and heard hours of testimonies highlighting the immense struggles faced by their families. Their voices must not be ignored. It would be unconscionable to let their cries for justice go unanswered, especially when we are meant to give thanks for all we have.

You have the opportunity to take a bold, decisive action that will change lives and elevate those who have long been overlooked. **Anything less than supporting a living wage for farmworkers would betray their dignity and contributions to our community, country, and globe.**

Please listen to the voices of farmworkers and support real solutions proposed by farmworkers themselves, not small gestures proposed by industry that only tinker at the margins of poverty and inequality. **I urge you to directly tackle the root cause of our community's suffering directly: raise farmworker wages now!**

Saludos,  
Natalia C. González-Escobar, M.A. (she, her, ella)

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Website