



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: 1st District Supervisor
Department No.: 011 – Board of Supervisors
For Agenda Of: June 22, 20
Placement: Administrative
Estimated Time:
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Board Member(s) 1st District Supervisor Das Williams
Contact Info: Esmeralda Estrada, 805-568-2155

SUBJECT: AB 941 (Farmworker Resource Program) Letter of Support

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Other Concurrence: N/A

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors

- a) Approve the attached letter of support for AB 941 and authorize the Chair to sign letter; and
- b) Determine that the above actions are not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), because pursuant to sections 153378(b)(4) and 15378(b)(5) the recommended actions consist of organizational, administrative or fiscal activities of government that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment.

Summary Text:

This item is on the agenda for the Board of Supervisors to consider taking a support position on Assembly Bill (A.B.) 941(Bennett & Rivas) – the Farmworker Resource Grant Program of California

Background:

On February 17th, 2021, Assemblymember Steve Bennett introduced A.B. 941, the Farmworker Resource Grant Program of California, which would establish a grant program for counties to establish farmworker resource centers that provide farmworkers and their families information and access to services related to, among other things, labor and employment rights, education, housing, immigration, and health and human services. On June 1st, 2021, the California State Assembly passed the bill on to the Senate where no subsequent action has been taken.

Assemblymember Bennett introduced the legislation because of the role he played as a Ventura County Supervisor in the creation of that county's Farmworker Resource Program. In Ventura County, after two years of organizing and advocacy from farmworkers and allies, and a year of dialogue and negotiation with key players in the local agriculture industry, the Ventura County Board of Supervisors voted in June of 2017 to allocate \$200,000 create a Ventura County Farmworker Resource Program. An advisory body with both farmworker advocate representatives, appointed by MICOP, and agriculture industry representatives, appointed by the Farm Bureau, oversaw the development of the program, which was publicly launched in 2019. As a first-of-its-kind program, housed within the County's Human Services Agency, its intention is to uplift working conditions for farmworkers in the agricultural industry. This program helps farmworkers learn about wage and hour laws, health and safety laws, and other legal rights, while also assisting farmworkers in navigating public agencies. Since its creation, the Resource Program has engaged with the agricultural workforce to build trust and communicate with the industry workers to meet their needs, directly serving over 1,400 farmworkers throughout the county.

Santa Barbara County's own agricultural heritage and substantial farmworker population puts our county in a prime position to take advantage of a state grant program to create our own farmworker resource program, if such a grant were to be created by the legislature. According to the Santa Barbara County Agricultural Production Report the 2019 crop year total gross production value of \$1,600,146,484 surpassing the gross production value for the prior year by \$78,625,992, an increase of 5.1%. Agriculture in Santa Barbara County has been a vital for sustaining a healthy local economy. As of 2016, the County of Santa Barbara ranks 13th in total crop value among the other 58 California counties.

The workers that enable Santa Barbara County's agricultural industry to thrive are critical to the success of the industry. According to the American Community Survey 2013 Public Use Microsample Data, Santa Barbara County is home to 18,017 farmworkers. These farmworkers have overwhelmingly migrated to our county from other countries and face unique challenges, including language barriers. A 2015 report from local advocacy group CAUSE, "Raising Up Farm Workers" (Attachment C), indicated that 72.7% of farmworkers in Santa Barbara County are not citizens and 83.2% migrated to the United States from Mexico.

Our Public Health Department has been working in conjunction with community groups and agricultural companies on multiple issues related to farmworkers over the last few years, including the creation of a farmworker sanitation working group to ensure local farmworkers have access to basic sanitation needs while they are working. Most recently, the Department and the County supported community members in the formation of the Latinx & Indigenous Migrant COVID-19 Response Task Force, which provides essential services to protect and support some of Santa Barbara County's most vulnerable community members from the urgent threat of the coronavirus pandemic. With the Board's support for this Taskforce, it seems in the Board's interest to also support A.B. 941.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

N/A

Fiscal Analysis:

N/A

Key Contract Risks:

N/A

Staffing Impacts:

N/A

Legal Positions:
N/A

FTEs: N/A

Attachments:

(A) AB 941 Letter of Support

(B) AB 941 Bill Text

(C) CAUSE “Raising Up Farm Workers – Santa Barbara County”

Authored by:

Esmeralda Estrada