

February 21, 2013



The Honorable George Miller
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and
The Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Miller:

Migrant and seasonal farmworkers are among the nation's most vulnerable in the current employment and economic climate. The Workforce Investment Act of 2013 you introduced with Representatives John Tierney (D-MA) and Rubén Hinojosa (D-TX) takes a positive step forward by continuing to invest in the National Farmworker Jobs Program, a targeted and fiscally responsible national job training program. The Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP) applauds this effort to ensure the most vulnerable Americans, like our nation's farmworkers, have access to the tailored education and training they need to attain good, self- and family-sustaining jobs.

AFOP is a national non-profit federation of non-profit and public agencies that operate the National Farmworker Jobs Program authorized under the Workforce Investment Act at Title I, Section 167. The thread that binds the Association is the concept that training and education can provide the launching pad to a better and more stable life for the workers who plant, tend, and harvest the crops that Americans consume at their tables.

- Migrant and seasonal farmworkers are an exceptionally hard-to-serve population with unique barriers that the traditional universal access model would not be able to effectively serve. Typically, farmworkers face language barriers; severe poverty; and very low math and literacy rates, with an average education level of just seventh to eighth grade.
- Farmworkers are an extremely mobile population. Due to the nature of farm work, it is imperative that bills seeking to reauthorize or update the Workforce Investment Act preserve the NFJP as a national program. It is unrealistic for Congress to expect governors to serve people who only work briefly in their state and then move elsewhere.

The NFJP, is a proven-effective federal job training program operated by 52 non-profit and public agencies that specialize in providing education and training to migrant and seasonal farmworkers. NFJP participants train for high-demand, high-growth work both in and outside of agriculture. AFOP's member agencies that are awarded the competitive grants provided by the U.S. Department of Labor typically place over 80% of job-training farmworker customers into good jobs with benefits.

The services AFOP members provide are integral to the agriculture industry's success and, consequently, the country's pursuit of job creation and economic stability. Again, we appreciate your commitment to making smart federal investments in programs that educate and train our nation's farmworkers for skills U.S. businesses need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jesús Gamboa". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Jesús Gamboa
President

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daniel Sheehan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

Daniel Sheehan
Executive Director