



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

December 11, 2025

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Justice in Motion Condemns New H-2A Wage Rule That Will Deepen Worker Exploitation

NEW YORK – Justice in Motion strongly opposes the Department of Labor’s new rule on the Adverse Effect Wage Rate for H-2A farmworkers.¹ This policy sharply reduces wages for some of the lowest-paid workers in the country and will make the agricultural workforce even more vulnerable to abuse, coercion, and labor trafficking.² Farmworkers perform essential, backbreaking labor yet consistently receive poverty-level wages, and H-2A workers are far more vulnerable due to recruitment debt and their dependence on a single employer.

The new rule gets rid of the farm labor survey and replaces it with data from lower-paying jobs, and allows employers to deduct housing costs, even though H-2A rules require them to provide housing for free.³ **These changes will reduce pay for H-2A workers in every state, and will have ripple effects for the broader farm labor market – harming U.S. workers by driving down wages.** When employers can hire H-2A workers at depressed wage levels, they gain a financial incentive to recruit more temporary migrant workers instead of offering fair wages to U.S. workers. As a result, U.S. farmworkers face lost job opportunities, reduced earnings, and increased economic insecurity.

Cathleen Caron, Executive Director at Justice in Motion: “Farmworkers, and H-2A workers in particular, have been ignored for too long. The administration cannot claim to protect U.S. workers while issuing a rule that slashes wages and increases the risk of abuse. This is hypocrisy – and the workers who feed this nation deserve better.”

This rule does not address the real problems temporary migrant farmworkers face, including illegal recruitment fees, crowded and unsafe employer housing, wage theft, and threats of retaliation.⁴ Lower wages leave workers with fewer resources and greater debt burdens, which will also make them more economically captive to their employers. This will also heighten the already significant risk of human trafficking by increasing economic coercion, deepening

¹ Adverse Effect Wage Rate Methodology for the Temporary Employment of H-2A Nonimmigrants in Non-Range Occupations in the United States, DOL Docket No. ETA-2025-0008.

² Economic Policy Institute, Trump’s new H-2A wage rule will radically cut the wages of all farmworkers, <https://www.epi.org/blog/trumps-new-h-2a-wage-rule-will-radically-cut-the-wages-of-all-farmworkers-new-estimates-show-farmworkers-stand-to-lose-4-4-to-5-4-billion-annually-under-dols-updated-adverse-effect/> (November, 2025).

³ Cornell University, Major H-2A Wage Changes: Overview of New AEWR Methodology, <https://agworkforce.cals.cornell.edu/2025/10/10/major-h-2a-wage-changes-overview-of-new-aewr-methodology>.

⁴ Justice in Motion, Visa Pages: U.S. Temporary Foreign Worker Visas, H-2A Visa, https://www.justiceinmotion.org/_files/ugd/64f95e_b4dd449182134ba6a12c678334ff4704.pdf.

workers' debt burdens, and expanding employers' power over H-2A workers who already face structural vulnerabilities within the temporary labor system.

Justice in Motion stands with farmworkers and our partners in calling for the rule to be withdrawn. Workers deserve fair pay, safe conditions, and meaningful protections that reduce the risk of trafficking and coercion. Policies that drive wages down only increase employer power and worker vulnerability. The people who plant, cultivate, and harvest our food deserve dignity, stability, and a system that protects them, not one that makes them easier to exploit.

For all media inquiries, please contact media@justiceinmotion.org

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[Justice in Motion](#) protects migrant rights by ensuring justice across borders. Our unique network of on-the-ground human rights defenders in Mexico and Central America partner with U.S. advocates to make sure that wherever migrants go, their rights will follow.