



March 24, 2020

Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

RE: Agricultural Temporary Worker Housing COVID-19 Assistance

Dear Governor Inslee:

Thank you for your leadership in this time of crisis for our state. I am writing to request assistance for owners and operators of seasonal agricultural Temporary Worker Housing (TWH) facilities in Washington State.

Twenty-five years ago, farmers in the state began stepping up to solve a real public health crisis – farmworkers who were camping outdoors or living in overcrowded or makeshift camps. If you speak with former Governor Locke, I am sure he will recall the crisis in the late 1990s that occurred after the standards for farmworker housing were established. Contrast that to today, where well-built garden apartments with central heating and air conditioning are available in most agricultural communities in Central Washington. In the last 20 years, we are aware of more than \$200 million spent by our state Department of Commerce, farmers, and associations like ours to build or purchase this housing. **By any measure, and compared with any other state, the Washington Temporary Workers Housing program is a success story.**

Critics of the program sometimes point out that the law requires seasonal TWH facilities to be licensed and inspected, but the Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Labor and Industries (L&I)¹ have never enforced the law or cited a farmer for operating an unlicensed facility. This may be true. DOH/L&I could do more to encourage voluntary licensing, and **reward employers who do the right thing.** That is our request today. We are asking DOH/L&I to immediately undertake these two initiatives:

1. Establish a “best practices” protocol for cleaning and disinfecting TWH facilities during the COVID- 19 crisis. We would like to see a short video or a pamphlet for operators. Our association would be happy to host a webinar or work with agency staff in any way to make this happen.
2. Make cleaning supplies available for licensed facilities. For each licensed bed, TWH operators should be able to obtain cleaning supplies. We suggest that these supplies be made available at DOH or L&I offices in key sites such as Wenatchee, Yakima, and Tri-Cities.

¹ Licensing of Temporary Housing facilities is a joint responsibility of the Departments of Health and Labor and Industries, and an MOU exists between those agencies and the Employment Security Department. For purpose of this letter, either DOH or L&I would be appropriate to provide assistance.

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Farmers stepped up to solve the crisis many years ago. These farmers are struggling to make ends meet and keep farmworkers employed through the current crisis. The federal and state government have allocated billions to aid employers and workers. Let us focus a small portion of that funding towards those who are on the front line in this crisis – seasonal farmworkers and the farmers who provide them housing.

I look forward to your assistance in this matter. We have staff who are immediately available to make this happen, I have contacted senior managers at the agencies involved, and I look forward to hearing from them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Fazio". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent "D" and "F".

Dan Fazio, CEO

C: Joel Sacks, Director, Department of Labor and Industries
Jon Wiesman, Director, Department of Health
Derek Sandison, Director, Washington State Department of Agriculture