

## Michigan 2020 Migrant Farm Worker Enumeration Profiles Study

Chairman VanWoerkom, Members of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agricultural and Rural Development, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the importance of the Migrant Farm Worker Enumeration Study.

I've shared a Power Point Presentation that shares information and data relative the work we do in the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity – Workforce Development. I shared about the outreach we conduct and the services we provide under the Monitor Advocate System, and you heard of the growing trend of the use of H-2A visa workers which provided data over the last 3 years. I'd like to ask to go off script a little and tell you about myself, my journey as a migrant and seasonal farm worker (MSFW), and how this enumeration study serves a greater purpose than simply conducting a study.

I grew up as a MSFW, traveling from Texas to Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan. We picked a variety of crops which included cucumbers, tomatoes, apples, cherries, strawberries, and blueberries. We would migrate from state to state, and even within the state. Throughout my youth I can remember the many programs and services that helped our family and encouraged my parents to settle in Michigan.

I can recall the as a child that teachers from the Migrant Head Start program visited our labor camp to explain about the program and recommending that they enroll us into the program to begin our educational pathway. Through my K-12 education, I was part of the Migrant Education Program offered through the Department of Education. Once in High School, I participated in the Upward Bound Program that offered High School students from underserved populations the opportunity to succeed in high school in preparation to attend college. As I neared graduation from high school, I was accepted at Central Michigan University to attend through an alternative entrance program titled the College Education Enhancement Program (CEEP). I later graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Public Administration with Emphasis in Community Development. It is this experience that I'd like the members of this Subcommittee to correlate to the need for this enumeration study and use the results of this study to drive state policy and legislation.

When looking at other sources for the data that the IMSC is seeking with respect to the progress we've made, and the improvements we need to make in this State in serving MSFWs, the data does not drill down far enough to effectively generate a report on it.

This enumeration study supports the Governor's Sixty by 30 initiative in identifying the areas of needed improvement to ensure that we as a state are providing equity in access to programs and services, which provide a pathway to a brighter future.

The Governor believes that everyone in Michigan has a right to an educational path to success - whether that is a certificate in the skilled trades, technical apprenticeship, or to pursue a college track.

Consider the economic impact that MSFWs have across the state, and more importantly within the rural communities which you all serve. As earlier stated, this study is necessary to identify the progress we've made as a State, and to identify areas where continued improvement is needed to better attract MSFWs and their families to live, work, and with the right motivation, settle in Michigan.

Thank you.