

AN IMPORTANT GAIN FOR WORKERS:
Update to Farmworker Housing Law a Good Beginning

(Sept 4, 2007 - RALEIGH) - Today, workers on North Carolina's farms face a better, safer, and healthier future. A new state law will improve housing conditions for the thousands of migrant workers who help North Carolina's agricultural industry thrive.

The new law improves the NC Department of Labor's inspection and enforcement processes to ensure that farmworkers have safe housing and clean mattresses on which to sleep, among other things. The department will now have the leverage needed to enforce state housing standards at many labor camps that do not pass the required pre-occupancy inspection.

"With this new law, the state labor department will be able to force reluctant farmers to do what is right - provide safe and dignified housing for their workers," said Melinda Wiggins, executive director of Student Action with Farmworkers, one of the many nonprofit organizations that make up the Farmworker Advocacy Network (FAN).

"Farmworkers deserve decent housing. Much more still needs to be done to tighten up outdated standards, but this bill is a good step in the right direction," said Carol Brooke, staff attorney with the North Carolina Justice Center, which is also a member of FAN.

In addition to passing the new legislation, the General Assembly appropriated funds for two additional farmworker housing inspectors.

FAN would like to recognize all of its members and supporters for their time and commitment and extend a special thank you to Sen. Charles Albertson, Sen. William Purcell, and Rep. Martha Alexander for their leadership in getting this bill passed.

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