

Agricultural Family Protection Act (HB 1818)

Support safe, healthy agricultural workplaces in North Carolina



Agricultural Workers & Pesticides

North Carolina ranks sixth in the country in the number of agricultural employees, with an estimated 150,000 workers who plant, tend, and harvest crops in every region of the state.

An estimated 62 million pounds of pesticides are applied to North Carolina crops annually.

Agricultural employees are often exposed to pesticides on the job, which can increase their risk of acute and chronic health problems.

Agricultural families face exposure when pesticides are inadvertently “taken home” on contaminated clothes, hair, and skin. Children are especially sensitive to the health risks posed by pesticide exposure.

Many agricultural workers live in housing that lacks telephones, making it impossible to seek emergency assistance in the case of pesticide poisoning.

Many housing units for agricultural workers lack adequate shower facilities to wash off pesticide residues after work or immediately after an exposure.

Agricultural workers are unable to file confidential complaints regarding workplace pesticide safety and may be subject to retaliation.

NC’s Pesticide Law contains loopholes wherein agricultural employers are not required to keep accurate records documenting their compliance with pesticide safety standards.

Recommendations

- **Require agricultural employers to maintain accurate records to document compliance with the Worker Protection Standard.** *Under the current law, there is no record-keeping requirement.*
- **Add a confidentiality clause that enables agricultural employees to confidentially file a complaint about workplace pesticide safety violations.** *Under the current law, agricultural workers cannot file confidential complaints.*
- **Add the NC Pesticide Law to the list of statutes covered under NC’s anti-retaliation law, to protect workers from retaliation when attempting to comply with the law.** *Under the current law, agricultural workers are not protected from retaliation.*
- **Ensure adequate pesticide decontamination facilities by requiring 1 showerhead per 8 workers—making the standard equal to NC jail standards.** *1 showerhead per 10 workers is currently required.*
- **Employers should ensure access to a working telephone and emergency medical contact information in every worker housing unit.** *Under the current law, telephones are not required.*
- **Remove the special provision that allows larger agricultural operators to pay lower fines than others who violate the pesticide law. Preserve the lower fines for small family farmers.** *Under the current law, the maximum pesticide fine is only \$500.*

THE NORTH CAROLINA PESTICIDE LAW SHOULD PROVIDE SAFE, HEALTHY WORKPLACES FOR ALL WHO WORK IN AGRICULTURE.

About (FAN) Farmworker Advocacy Network

The Farmworker Advocacy Network (FAN) is a network of organizations that advocates for improvements in agricultural workers’ living and working conditions.

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