

Event: California Future of Work Commission Listening Session: Immigrant Worker Service Providers

Date / Location: 23 March 2020 / Webinar / 10:00a – 12:00p

FWC Commissioners Attending: N/A

G.O. / LWDA Staff Attending: Abby Snay, Myke Griseta

Discussion Summary: Due to the high volume of participating organizations and the immediacy of concerns associated with the economic fallout stemming from the COVID-19 crisis, the discussion focused on responses to a single question:

What challenges do the changing nature of work and the changing nature of our economy pose for immigrant workers (including workers who are refugees, day laborers, and/or undocumented), and what are potential responses to those challenges (i.e. policies, programs, direct service interventions)?

Summary of Responses:

- COVID-19 Impact
 - Multiple attendees expect the crisis to exacerbate barriers already facing immigrant workers
 - 20,000 jobs already lost in hospitality sector in L.A., largely immigrant workers—many of whom are undocumented and may be on the verge of homelessness
 - Uncertainty for workers who need to accrue work experience (e.g. clinical hours) to attain professional certificates in in-demand health occupations
 - Self-employed workers, particularly drivers and ride-share drivers, are completely out of work; face unclear direction from rideshare companies on UI (UI not accessible to many laid off immigrant workers)
 - It is currently hard to reach students due to gaps in tech literacy and access to technology in immigrant communities; need for more training and access
 - Expected increase in homelessness among day laborers
- Issues related to working conditions for immigrant workers
 - Immigrant workers are disproportionately concentrated in occupations in which they are exposed to dangerous health conditions (e.g. pesticides, unsanitary environments) often without proper training or equipment.
 - Gig economy workers do not receive protection under CAL-OSHA
 - Many workers face retaliation for reporting poor working conditions; there is high demand for increased enforcement of labor protections for immigrant workers
- Other challenges
 - Immigrant workers who performed skilled work in their home countries face “brain waste” due to working survival jobs to support their families; insufficient pathways for former healthcare workers into healthcare jobs in the U.S.
 - Understanding of and adaptation to U.S. work culture poses a barrier on new immigrant workers
 - Metrics of success for workforce programs do not fully capture the benefits of serving immigrant workers
- Best Practices, Program Models, Policy Interventions
 - SEIU United HC Workers West Training and Ed Fund: Apprenticeships into nursing assistant jobs using the I-BEST model (160 hour pre-apprenticeship)
 - Expanded online learning opportunities and technology training (e.g. MS Office)
 - Small business engagement: small businesses as employers for immigrants and refugees
 - Policy recommendation: Collective bargaining bill for non-unionized home healthcare sector to account for low wages, poor job security, and poor working conditions
 - Policy recommendation: Expand EITC eligibility, sick leave, and disability protections for immigrants