

Excerpt from March 2010 Commission meeting adopting the following recommendations from “A Report on the Conditions of Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers in Michigan” prepared by the Commission:

The Michigan Civil Rights Commission therefore directs that the Michigan Department of Civil Rights work intensely with the DHS Interagency Migrant Service Committee, other State departments and agencies, and appropriate non-governmental entities to:

- 1) Identify ways to improve migrant labor housing inspections. This includes both ensuring that present inspection levels are maintained and finding ways to inspect housing after occupancy to ensure that it is not allowed to fall below minimum legal requirements while in use, ensuring enforcement of maximum occupancy limits for individual units, preventing minors from living in a unit with unrelated adults, or any other changes that can be identified to better protect the occupants of such housing. The percentage of total seasonal migrant labor housing that is inspected must be maintained, or even better, increased.
- 2) Ensure swift, certain, systemic and sufficient fines for housing, health and/or other violations as a deterrent to bad conduct.
- 3) Ensure migrant seasonal farmworkers are not paid less than the required minimum wage due to insufficient ‘piece rates’ or other reasons.
- 4) Build upon the efforts of the Interagency Migrant Service Committee to coordinate the actions of State agencies who deal with migrant farmworker programs, growers, migrant support service providers and other community leaders with the continuing goal of improving services to all parties, avoiding duplication of effort, and improving the living and working conditions of migrant farmworkers and their families.
- 5) Work with the Interagency Migrant Service Committee to determine whether the goal of improving the living and working conditions of migrant farmworkers and their families could be better met by reassigning specific functions from one department/agency to another.
- 6) Identify how, and where necessary implement, cross-training of State employees working on site with growers and /or farmworkers in one area of expertise, to also function as additional observers on behalf of other departments and agencies.

- 7) Ensure workers, growers and crew leaders are regularly informed about the legal rights of farmworkers including, but not limited to, the right to drinking water, handwashing facilities and bathrooms in the fields.
- 8) Work with Michigan State Police to clarify, and to inform both the public and law enforcement agencies about, the laws and regulations effecting the enforcement of immigration laws by police officers.
- 9) Identify specific amendments to Michigan law that could be made to address concerns raised in the report.
- 10) Find funding for and conduct an Enumeration Study to update the 2006 information.
- 11) Work with the Secretary of State to clarify the documentation and status requirements for both drivers" and marriage licenses and ensure uniform enforcement by all county clerks.
- 12) Eliminate any illegal use of child labor in agriculture.
- 13) Increase the number of State employees working with seasonal migrant farmworkers who speak Spanish and provide tools to facilitate communication between non-Spanish speaking State employees and non-English speaking workers.
- 14) Solicit recommendations from organizations with expertise on farmworker issues for ways these next steps may be accomplished, and provide submitted suggestions to the Commission, and the Interagency Migrant Service Committee.
- 15) Designate an employee of the Department as the Commission's liaison on protecting migrant seasonal farmworkers, and assign this person with the duty of coordinating the above efforts with the Interagency Migrant Service Committee and reporting back to this Commission on progress.