

# MONTEREY COUNTY



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March 8, 2021

The Honorable Alex Padilla  
112 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

### Re: S. xxx, Citizenship for Essential Workers Act – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Padilla:

I am writing today on behalf of the Monterey County Board of Supervisors to express our support for the Citizenship for Essential Workers Act (S. xxx).

Undocumented immigrants are performing essential jobs in many different sectors of the workforce in Monterey County. As you know, agriculture is the cornerstone of prosperity in Monterey County, contributing a total of \$8.1 billion and 76,000 jobs to the local economy. The Salinas Valley, known as the “salad bowl” of the nation, produces a variety of crops that are shipped to customers all over the world. Most of these specialty crops, such as strawberries and leafy green vegetables, have been hand-picked by immigrant farmworkers for generations, mainly because farmers are unable to secure an adequate workforce without them. In Monterey County, our food and farmworkers are our “quintessential workers.”

The County’s undocumented health care workers, as well as those serving in necessary custodial and administrative roles to ensure health care settings remain safe and open, have been critical to the pandemic response. And our undocumented immigrants who are keeping grocery shelves stocked, packing warehouses, and cleaning and sanitizing businesses that have stayed open are putting their lives on the line every day for those of us fortunate enough to be able to work from home.

The Citizenship for Essential Workers Act would create an expedited pathway to citizenship for the over 5 million essential workers without permanent legal status who have kept Americans healthy, fed, and safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill provides undocumented essential workers with a fast, accessible, and secure path to citizenship, beginning with immediate adjustment of status to legal permanent resident. The bill also covers undocumented workers who worked in essential industries but lost employment due to COVID-19, including leaving the job due to unsafe working conditions, as well as undocumented relatives of an essential worker who died from COVID-19. Applicants for adjustment of status will be required to pay a reasonable fee and go through a background check.

We are pleased to offer our support for the Citizenship for Essential Workers Act, and we thank you for sponsoring this important legislation to provide a path to citizenship for Monterey County’s essential workers.

Sincerely,

**DRAFT**

Wendy Root Askew  
Chair, Board of Supervisors

Cc: U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein

Rep. Jimmy Panetta, 20<sup>th</sup> Congressional District

Clerk of the Board • 168 W. Alisal St., Salinas, CA 93901 • (831) 755-5066 • [cob@co.monterey.ca.us](mailto:cob@co.monterey.ca.us)