

Date of Hearing: March 25, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Matt Haney, Chair

AB 1890 (Aguiar-Curry) – As Amended March 10, 2026

**SUBJECT:** County of Napa: farmworker housing: funding

**SUMMARY:** Increases the amount of funding the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) awards to the Napa County Housing Authorities (NCHA) farmworker centers from \$250,000 to \$500,000, annually. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Provides that funding for this program is contingent upon an appropriation in the Budget.
- 2) Provides that funding provided to NCHA shall not be used to house H-2A workers, and any employer that utilizes Napa County farmworker centers to house H-2A workers is required to reimburse the state for the cost.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Establishes the Napa County Farmworker Centers Account (NCFCA) to be administered by HCD through its Office of Migrant Services (OMS) and requires HCD to administer the program. (Health and Safety Code Section (HSC) 50711.5)
- 2) Provides that funds provided to NCHA are to assist in financing, maintenance, and operation of the Napa County farmworker centers for year-round use by migrant and nonmigrant farm labor employees. (HSC 5011.5)
- 3) Allows the funds to be used for specified predevelopment costs, acquisition, development, redevelopment, related infrastructure costs, and operating costs. (HSC 5011.5)
- 4) Grants the NCHA continued ownership and operation of farmworker centers pursuant to the local ordinances, regulations, or bylaws currently applicable. (HSC 5011.5)
- 5) Awards up to \$250,000 in matching funds to the NCHA upon demonstration that the NCHA is capable of continuing to effectively serve the housing needs of Napa's farmworkers. (HSC 5011.5)
- 6) Requires that the NCHA provide equal or greater funds from local sources to support financing, maintenance, and operations of housing in order to be eligible for NCFCA funding. (HSC 5011.5)
- 7) Requires the NCHA to demonstrate its capability of ensuring the fiscal integrity of the farmworker centers and maintaining the projects in a decent, safe, and sanitary manner for at least 25 years. (HSC 5011.5)
- 8) Allows year-round use of farmworker centers to be interrupted, if necessary, in order to perform maintenance purposes, to allow new migrant farmworkers to obtain housing, or for any other purpose the NCHA deems necessary. (HSC 5011.5)

- 9) Provides that HCD is not required to promulgate regulations for purposes of soliciting or awarding funds. (HSC 5011.5)
- 10) Provides that HCD shall use specified funds allocated from the Building Homes and Jobs Trust Fund, as provided by SB 2 (Atkins) of the 2017-18 legislative session, if that bill is enacted to fund the Napa County farmworker centers. If SB 2 is not enacted, another funding source must be identified. (HSC 5011.5)
- 11) Finds and declares that a special statute is necessary because of the unique circumstances concerning funding for Napa County farmworker centers. (HSC 50711.5)
- 12) Authorizes Napa County to form a county service area fund for the construction and maintenance of farmworker housing centers. (Government (GOV) Code Section 25213.2).
- 13) Levies \$10 annually per planted vineyard acre on the agricultural industry to support the three Napa farmworker centers (GOV Code 25213.2).
- 14) Assists agricultural communities with the development, construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, and operation of migrant farm labor centers through HCD's OMS (HSC 50710-50715).
- 15) Establishes the Joe Serna, Jr., Farmworker Housing Grant Program (Serna Program) at HCD to fund the new construction, rehabilitation, and acquisition of housing for farmworkers (HCS 50515.5-50517.11).

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown

**COMMENTS:**

**Author's statement:** According to the author, "farmworkers work in the hardest jobs in Napa County's agricultural economy and play a vital role in its success. But many face limited access to affordable housing. NCHAFC are a model for partnerships between employers, government and workers, with subsidies provided by the county and self-assessments on farmers. They provide an important resource by offering low-cost housing and support services for agricultural workers in a region with severe housing shortages. AB 1890 builds on the framework established under AB 317 by extending and increasing the state's authorized matching funds, addressing rising operating costs and supporting the continued operation of these centers. While the centers are located in Napa County, the agricultural workforce they serve contributes to an industry that is critical to the regional and statewide economy. By sustaining stable housing for farmworkers, AB 1890 helps strengthen California's agricultural workforce and support the broader food production system."

**Napa Farmworker Housing:** Napa County's economy is based largely on its \$1 billion agriculture industry, the value of which arises almost exclusively from its wine grape crops. This creates a massive demand for farmworkers in the county, and a related need for housing to support these migrant workers. Farmworkers frequently face significant barriers to accessing stable and affordable housing, particularly in regions like Napa County, where housing costs are high and supply is limited.

To address the housing needs of the farmworker workforce, Napa County operates farmworker housing centers that provide dormitory style housing to migrant farmworkers. Napa County's farmworker centers are different from the other farmworker centers in California. HCD operates the Office of Migrant Services (OMS) program, which manages state-owned farm worker housing centers that provide family-style units that are open 270 days each year. In comparison, Napa County's centers are dorm-style operations that cater to single male residents. Napa County operates three farmworker centers, totaling 180 beds, serving an average of 400 farmworkers during the eleven months of the year that each is open. Housing consists of dorm-style accommodations with two renters per room, and lodgers receive food, hot showers, laundry facilities, a library, and internet access on-site. The center also provides opportunities to participate in community gardens, health screenings, and literacy programs. Farmworkers tend to have lower incomes, higher risk of living in poverty, and limited access to safe, healthy, and affordable housing choices.

In 2001, Napa County was authorized through AB 1550 (Wiggins) Chapter 340 to form a county service area (CSA) to raise funding for the purpose of acquiring, constructing, leasing, or maintaining farmworker housing. The Napa County Board of Supervisors (BOS) adopted an ordinance in 2002 to create CSA No. 4, and, with the approval of the affected property owners, levied a \$10 assessment per acre of planted vineyard. AB 1550 limited the original assessment levied by CSA No. 4 to a five-year period but authorized the BOS to seek an extension of the assessment every five years thereafter. In 2017, SB 240 (Dodd), Chapter 72, increased the assessment to \$15 per acre.

This private assessment, now at \$14 per acre, generates approximately \$650,000 in annual revenue, representing about 30% of the operating costs of the housing centers. The assessment has been reauthorized by the property owners every five years since then.

In 2017, AB 317 (Aguiar-Curry), Chapter 469, authorized \$200,000 in state General Fund to support the Napa County farmworker centers. This funding will expire in the fiscal year 2028-29. At the time, the author argued that inflation had increased the farmworker centers' annual operating expenses, and while the County of Napa and its partners have been fiscally responsible in building reserves, increasing costs had eroded this source. The additional funding provided by AB 317 would stave off closure of the centers at the time, which the county was predicting would happen by 2018 when the centers would run out of reserves. HCD operates all other OMS centers. AB 317 essentially directed funds that would go toward state-operated OMS centers in Napa to support the existing farmworker centers upon demonstration that the NCHA is capable of continuing to effectively serve the housing needs of migrant or other farmworkers. The NCHA must provide equal or greater funds from local sources.

This bill would increase the amount that the state provides to the Napa County farm centers from \$250,000 to \$500,000 annually. The author is also requesting an allocation in the budget to fund the centers.

***H-2A Visa Program:*** The H-2A Visa program is a federal program that allows U.S. employers or U.S. agents who meet specific regulatory requirements to bring foreign nationals to the United States to fill temporary agricultural jobs. Petitioners requesting to utilize this program must demonstrate that there are not enough U.S. workers who are able, willing, qualified, and available to do the temporary work. They must also show that employing H-2A workers will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of similarly employed U.S. workers.

Employers must provide clean and safe housing to H-2A workers at no charge to the employee. Employees are responsible for their food costs, but employers must provide a place for workers to prepare their meals. An employer must arrange for a worker's transportation from the originating country to the place of employment or reimburse the worker for transportation costs.

Since its introduction in 1986, the H-2A program has grown steadily in size. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, in 2000, there were approximately 30,000 visa-holders, in 2010 there were approximately 55,000, and in 2016 there were over 134,000 (including 11,000 in California). This represents about 4-7% of farmworkers nationwide, and 2-3% in California. According to the Economic Policy Institute, this increase is because "most crop workers are unauthorized, and farmers are turning to H-2A guestworkers as unauthorized migration from Mexico to the United States slows, to replace current workers who leave agriculture to find non-farm jobs."

The H-2A program is not uncontroversial. Farmers convey that the additional cost of providing housing and transportation, without the ability to offset those costs through lower wages, limit their use of the program. However, they cite its practical necessity in the face of a diminishing labor supply and the inability of Congress to pass immigration reform that meets the well-documented needs of the nation's food producers. Opponents point to the fact that H-2A visa ties the worker to the employer. They cite power imbalance as enabling substantial abuses, including lack of access to legal resources, wage theft, poor housing, denial of medical benefits for on-the-job injuries, and withholding of documents.

As stated above, current federal law requires employers utilizing the H-2A program to provide clean and safe housing to H-2A workers at no charge to the employee. According to the sponsor of this bill, Napa County farmworker centers do not house H-2A workers. Workers are not referred to the centers by their employers, but rather learn about the center through outreach made by the Napa Housing Authority. This bill prohibits centers from providing housing to H-2A workers, and if they do, employers must reimburse the state for the cost of the housing.

***Arguments in Support:*** According to the sponsor, the Napa County Board of Supervisors, "Farmworkers are essential to California's agricultural economy, yet many struggle to find safe and affordable housing. Limited housing options often force workers to commute long distances, live in overcrowded conditions, or leave the region entirely. Ensuring access to stable, affordable housing is critical to supporting the agricultural workforce that sustains local communities and California's broader food production system. AB 1890 increases the authorized state matching funds to help address rising operating costs and ensure the continued operation of these centers. By strengthening an existing and proven partnership between the state and local housing providers, the bill helps maintain stable housing for farmworkers while supporting the agricultural workforce that California relies on."

***Arguments in Opposition:*** None on file.

***Related Legislation:***

*AB 317 (Aguiar-Curry), Chapter 469, Statutes of 2017* established the NCFCA within the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and authorized \$250,000 in funding annually.

*SB 240 (Dodd), Chapter 72, Statutes of 2017* increases the county service area assessment on productive vineyard acres from \$10 to \$15 per vineyard acre.

*AB 1550 (Wiggins), Chapter 340, Statutes of 2001* authorized the County of Napa to establish county service areas for the sole purpose of acquiring, constructing, leasing, or maintaining farmworker housing.

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

**Support**

Napa County Board of Supervisors (Sponsor)  
American Canyon Chamber of Commerce  
California Farm Bureau Federation  
City of Napa  
City of St. Helena  
CommuniCare+OLE  
Generation Housing  
Napa Chamber of Commerce  
Napa County Farm Bureau  
Napa County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce  
Napa County Hispanic Network  
Napa Housing Coalition  
Napa Valley Community Foundation  
Napa Valley Community Housing  
Napa Valley Vintners  
Providence  
Puertas Abiertas Community Resource Center  
Rios Farming Co.  
Rios Farming Company, LLC  
Silverado Farming  
UnidosUS  
Up Valley Family Centers of Napa County  
Up Valley Family Centers of Napa County  
Winegrowers of Napa County

**Opposition**

None on file.

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