
THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 1890
Author: Aguiar-Curry (D), et al.
Amended: 3/10/26 in Assembly
Vote: 21

SENATE HOUSING COMMITTEE: 10-0, 6/10/26

AYES: Arreguín, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cortese, Durazo, Grayson, Ochoa
Bogh, Padilla, Pérez

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 8/13/26

AYES: Cervantes, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 74-0, 5/21/26 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: County of Napa: farmworker housing: funding

SOURCE: Napa County

DIGEST: This bill increases the amount of funding the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) awards to the Napa County Housing Authority's (NCHA) farmworker centers from \$250,000 to \$500,000, annually.

ANALYSIS:

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.
- 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.

- 3) Grants the NCHA continued ownership and operation of farmworker centers pursuant to the local ordinances, regulations, or bylaws currently applicable.
- 4) 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.
- 5) 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.
- 6) 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.
- 7) 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.
- 8) Authorizes Napa County to form a county service area fund for the construction and maintenance of farmworker housing centers.
- 9) Levies \$10 annually per planted vineyard acre on the agricultural industry to support the three Napa farmworker centers.
- 10) Assists agricultural communities with the development, construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, and operation of migrant farm labor centers through HCD's OMS Centers Program.
- 11) 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.

This bill:

- 1) Increases the amount of funding HCD awards to NCHA farmworker centers from \$250,000 to \$500,000, annually.
- 2) Provides that funding for this program and policy changes made in this bill is contingent upon an appropriation by the Legislature in the Budget.

- 3) 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.

Comments

- 1) *Author's statement.* "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. Napa County's farmworker housing centers 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."
- 2) *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, AB 1550 (Wiggins, Chapter 340) authorized Napa County 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 (Aguilar-Curry, Chapter 469) authorized \$200,000 in state General Funds 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 was intended to prevent the 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 increases 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.

- 3) *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.

AB 1783 (Rivas, Chapter 866, Statutes of 2019) prohibited state housing funds from being utilized for constructing housing for H-2A workers, including the following programs: Community Service Block Grants, Building Homes and Jobs Trust Fund, Joe Serna, Jr. Farmworker Housing Grant Program, and other programs for migratory workers, but does not include any allocation of federal or state low-income housing tax credits.

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. Consistent with AB 1783, 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.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- Ongoing annual local assistance costs of up to \$250,000, beginning in 2027-28, to provide additional matching funds to the NCHA for its farmworker centers. (General Fund)
- HCD indicates that it would not incur any additional workload-related costs to administer the program as a result of this bill. (General Fund)

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/13/26)

Napa County (source)
 City of Napa
 County of Napa
 Family Winemakers of California
 Napa Chamber of Commerce
 Napa County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
 Napa Valley Vintners
 Providence
 Rios Farming Co.
 The Napa Valley Farmworker Foundation
 Unidosus
 Upvalley Family Centers of Napa County

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/13/26)

None received

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 74-0, 5/21/26

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lee,

Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan,
Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ransom, Michelle
Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins,
Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson,
Zbur, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Arambula, Chen, Garcia, Lackey, Ramos, Celeste
Rodriguez

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8/15/26 13:29:10

**** END ****