
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Anna Caballero, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 845 (Arambula) - Employment: complaints: agricultural employees

Version: April 21, 2025

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: July 7, 2025

Policy Vote: L., P.E. & R. 5 - 0

Mandate: No

Consultant: Robert Ingenito

Bill Summary: AB 845 would require the Agricultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB), and the Department of Industrial Relations' (DIR) Division of Labor Standards and Enforcement (DLSE) and Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA), upon intake of a complaint by an agricultural employee, as defined, to collaborate with each other and take all reasonable efforts to transmit the complaint to the appropriate entity for processing and investigation.

Fiscal Impact:

- ALRB anticipates annual costs of \$961,000 (Labor Workforce Development Fund).
- DIR would incur first-year costs of \$2.9 million, and \$2.2 million annually thereafter, to implement the provisions of the bill (Labor Enforcement and Compliance Fund).

Background: Agricultural employees' complaints about labor law violations are enforced by three distinct state entities depending on the type of complaint being alleged. Cal/OSHA has jurisdiction over health and safety complaints, DLSE has jurisdiction over wage and hour complaints, and ALRB has jurisdiction over complaints related to collective bargaining and unfair labor practices. With a triumvirate of entities covering different labor violations, a worker unfamiliar with the state's enforcement system may struggle to determine to which state agency the worker should take their complaint. This is especially true if the worker faces language or cultural barriers.

A February 2025 report from the University of California, Berkeley Possibility Lab found that the majority of low-wage workers, including agricultural workers, are not even aware of the state government entities tasked with enforcing their rights. In fact, in their statewide survey, they found that workers have a relatively low familiarity with state agencies and that nearly two-thirds of workers (65 percent) have heard of Cal/OSHA, but no other department or agency that serves California workers was as familiar to a majority of workers. Specifically, only 18 percent of respondents indicated they had heard of DIR, and 13 percent had not heard of any labor-related department or agency.

Recently, there have been an emphasis to educate workers in rural and semi-rural areas on workplace rights, increase access to state services for workers in those areas, and improve state labor enforcement programs. For instance, funding for ALRB during the 2024 Budget Act established the Rural Strategic Engagement Program to conduct outreach to rural workers. The funding required ALRB and DIR to implement the three

goals of the Program: (1) increase access to in-person services in farmworker communities, (2) establish a no-wrong door policy for workers, and (3) simplify access to information for workers.

Proposed Law: This bill would require ALRB, DLSE, and Cal/OSHA, upon intake of a complaint by an agricultural employee, as defined, to collaborate with each other and take all reasonable efforts to transmit the complaint to the appropriate entity (as defined) for processing and investigation.

Related Legislation: AB 107 (Gabriel, Chapter 22, Statutes of 2024) included appropriations to ALRB and DIR to implement the three goals of the Rural Strategic Engagement Program: (1) increase access to in-person services in farmworker communities, (2) establish a no-wrong door policy for workers, and (3) simplify access to information for workers.

Staff Comments: The 2025 Budget Act appropriated \$4.4 million each to ALRB and DIR for the Rural Strategic Engagement Program, and stated the intent to appropriate \$4.3 million to ALRB and \$4.6 million to DIR in 2026-27 for the Program. ALRB's and DIR's budget change proposal for the Program included the following costs to improve services to farmworkers by initiating better inter-agency training for enforcement and outreach, similar to the work required by this bill: (1) \$2 million for consultants to provide specialized training to staff and management, and (2) \$1.5 million to cover location and travel costs. Thus, workload consistent with this bill is funded at ALRB and DIR through 2026-27; however, additional funds, but of a smaller magnitude, would likely be needed to continue inter-agency efforts in the out years.

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