



SENATE LEGISLATION

2020-2021

SR# 2021- 013

Date Introduced: Oct. 13, 2020

Title: On Calling for Solidarity with Farmworkers

Whereas, our university prides itself and is guided by the principal of sustainability which is utilized by a variety of courses and departments including but not limited to: University Colloquium, the Service Learning Department, and the Honors College. Our university defines sustainability using the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals which include: no poverty; zero hunger; good health and well-being; gender equality; clean water and sanitation; decent work and economic growth; industry, innovation, and infrastructure; reduced inequality; sustainable cities and communities; responsible consumption and production; peace and justice strong institutions; and so on. All of these goals contribute to sustainability, which ultimately help make our world a safer, healthier, and equitable place by alleviating suffering.

Whereas, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), located just 40 minutes away in Immokalee, is an internationally-recognized human rights organization that was founded by farmworkers to eradicate subpoverty wages, discrimination, sexual violence and modern slavery in the U.S. agricultural industry. FGCU and the CIW have a longstanding history of collaboration through but not limited to: service learning work offered by the Service Learning Department, educational events with the Department of Language and Literature in the College of Arts & Sciences, Immokalee Immersion trips and educational sessions with the Honors College, meetings with President Martin who is supportive of this organization, and through events with the student organization, FGCU Student/Farmworker Alliance.

Whereas, fighting against injustice in the fields is equivalent to fighting for human rights. Without worker education and participation, comprehensive, third-party auditing and market-based enforcement, social responsibility programs have failed to adequately protect farmworkers against generations of abuses, including: sexual assault and harassment; wage theft; modern day slavery; discrimination; physical violence; verbal abuse; pesticide exposure; no access to bathrooms or clean drinking water; and no protection from climate conditions such as lightning and extreme heat. The CIW created the Obama Presidential Medal-winning Fair Food Program to stop these abuses and protect farmworkers. The Fair Food Standards Council, an independent monitoring organization, acts as a third party auditor that manages the Fair Food Program's 24/7 hotline for farmworkers to report abuses and interviews at least 50% of the workforce during auditing sessions on participating farms. Farmworker leaders with the CIW conduct worker-to-worker know-your-rights trainings in the fields to empower workers to report abuses. Further, the Fair Food Program requires that participating buyers sign legally binding agreements committing to the strict, farmworker-design Fair Food Code of Conduct and to pay a penny-per-pound premium on their produce purchases, which is passed down to farmworkers as a bonus in their paycheck and helps eliminate poverty wages.

Whereas,

14 major food retail corporations have signed onto the Fair Food Program as participating buyers, including but not limited to: Taco Bell, McDonald’s, Burger King, Walmart, Chipotle, Subway, and FGCU’s own Campus Dining provider, Chartwells Compass. While some corporations, like Walmart and Subway, quickly signed onto the Fair Food Program, others like, Taco Bell and Burger King did not. The CIW, the national Student/Farmworker Alliance, and other allies across the country have led massive, nonviolent consumer campaigns to convince these corporations to eliminate human rights abuses in their supply chains by joining the Fair Food Program. Today, the Fair Food Program is considered the “gold standard” in social responsibility programs and its Worker driven Social Responsibility model has been replicated and adapted in other low-wage industries across the globe.

Whereas,

Wendy’s, one of the largest fast food chains in the world, has refused to join the Fair Food Program for over seven years. The company has gone so far to avoid protecting farmworkers in its supply chain by abandoning its longtime tomato suppliers in Florida to purchase from the Mexican tomato industry, where farmworkers are routinely exploited and child labor and modern slavery is endemic. After the CIW raised national awareness about Wendy’s egregious choice in suppliers, Wendy’s announced that it would source its tomatoes from greenhouse operations in Canada and the United States. Although greenhouses are portrayed positively, they do not guarantee human rights for workers who labor within. Wendy’s has further avoided the Fair Food Program by claiming its own corporate auditing program ensures farm labor protections. However, this voluntary Code of Conduct does not include participation by the workers whose rights it’s intended to protect or any verifiable enforcement mechanism to remedy violations.

Therefore:

in 2016 the CIW launched a national consumer boycott of Wendy’s calling on the fast-food chain to ensure farmworkers in its supply chain are treated with dignity and respect by joining the Fair Food Program. The Wendy’s Boycott campaign works to fulfill the principle of sustainability and to ensure basic human rights for one of the least paid, most unprotected jobs in America.

Therefore, let it be enacted:

that the FGCU Student Body Senate recognizes how sustainability intersects with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers’ Campaign for Fair Food; calls on Wendy’s to join the Fair Food Program; calls upon the Student Government Director of Communication and Marketing to share this resolution on social media platforms; calls upon administration to not allow Wendy’s to become a food provider on campus unless the company signs onto the Fair Food Program; and directs the Senate President and Student Body President to send this resolution to President Martin, Steve Magiera and Joseph McDonald Jr. of the Division of Administrative Services and Finance, Casey Garcia, the Assistant Director of Business Services, and Precious Gunter of the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance.

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Sponsor(s):

Senate Action: Adopted


Carson S. Brown, Senate President


Date