



NORTH CAROLINA STATE GRANGE

March 31, 2009

To: Members of the Agriculture/Environment/Natural Resources Committee
From: Allison Fowler, Legislative Director, North Carolina State Grange
Jimmy Gentry, President, North Carolina State Grange
Re: SB 881 – AgRELIEF Act/Cost Share Program

Dear Senators:

The North Carolina State Grange has been a long-time advocate for farmers and an important part of our work has been on securing reliable, affordable and legal temporary labor. SB 881 which would establish the Temporary Agricultural Labor Cost Share Program will alleviate much of the burden that is currently on the backs of farmers whose intention is to provide the state and nation with an abundant food supply while following the law and hiring legal temporary farm workers.

The cost of following the law and hiring farm workers through the H2A program is extraordinary. About 10,000 H2A workers are hired each year by North Carolina's tobacco, cucumber and strawberry farmers. The AgRELIEF Act will assist farmers with paying for round-trip transportation and subsistence costs for an H2A worker to travel to and from their country of origin, the processing charges and administrative fees and dues, US State Department Visa fees and Border Patrol Crossing fees for each H2A worker and/or US Consulate application and appointment fees for each H2A worker. Farmers would only be allowed to participate in this Cost Share program if they are in federal compliance (providing housing, workers' compensation insurance, auto insurance and pesticide worker protection training)

Please support North Carolina's farmers and support SB 881 which will provide reimbursement of expenses for the legal interim employment of farmworkers.

Sincerely,

Allison Fowler *Jimmy Gentry*

Allison Fowler

Jimmy Gentry

Legislative Director

President