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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Essential Workers Take On Most Risks in Pandemic**

**Will the State of Ohio Make Them Priority for Vaccines?**

Columbus, OH – Essential Ohio, a state-wide campaign working to create long-lasting policy change that protects essential workers, sent a [letter](#) to Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and Health Department Director Stephanie McCloud today. Their demand? That all workers who labor in-person--including immigrants--be prioritized to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, as per CDC guidelines.

They write:

[M]any people are fortunate to be able to shelter themselves indoors for safety and isolation, but our essential workforce is not. Instead they have taken on new risks to themselves and their families that have made it possible for others to stay safe and Ohio's economy to restart. One such example is found in **Ohio's agricultural industry, which relies on a historically marginalized and vulnerable migrant workforce and has continued to employ and bring in thousands of workers to ensure that Ohioans and the rest of the country have food on their plates** during this dangerous and challenging time.

The letter also calls on the state government to limit the collection of personal information while administering its vaccine plan, so that everyone in Ohio feels safe signing up for and receiving the vaccine.

"Keeping Essential Workers, regardless of status and across every industry, healthy during this pandemic should be a top priority in Ohio and across the country. Our country would come to a screeching halt without the Essential Workers who continually put themselves and their families at risk during this pandemic," said **Deb Kline, Director, Cleveland Jobs With Justice**.

"Governor DeWine has already let down the Ohio community by rushing to restart the economy and to reopen schools before workers are fully vaccinated and community spread is under control. This crisis is still urgent and far from over. We owe it to all frontline workers, including food and farmworkers, people in retail, production and manufacturing and of course, teachers and care workers to make safety our priority -- because safety at work is safety for our families and our communities," added **Magda Orlander, safety trainer, Cincinnati Interfaith Workers Center**.

**Mónica Ramírez, Founder & President of Justice For Migrant Women**, said: "We are deeply concerned for the thousands of essential workers, particularly farmworkers and other food workers, in Ohio who have been deemed essential and help to feed us every single day, yet are not recognized as such when it comes to vaccine priority, let alone accountability and preventative measures for employers in our state. It is critical that we prioritize farmworkers and all frontline workers, regardless of their immigration

status, that have been risking their own health to perform life sustaining work for our communities. As the vaccination process continues, it is also crucial to implement mandates for employers such that they're accountable for providing a safe and healthy workplace during COVID-19 and beyond this pandemic.”

*Read the full letter [here](#).*

#EssentialOH is powered by ABLE, Justice for Migrant Women, the Ohio Immigrant Alliance, Cleveland Jobs with Justice, La Conexión, Policy Matters, Cincinnati Interfaith Workers Center, and Central Ohio Worker Center. Essential Ohio is part of a national campaign, Always Essential.

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