

Guiding Principles on Immigration

Migrant Health Promotion Board of Directors

October 15, 2008

Migrant Health Promotion is a national nonprofit organization with a mission to strengthen the capacity of farmworker and migrant families to live healthy lives within healthy communities. In its 25 years of existence, Migrant Health Promotion has found that its ability to fulfill its mission is greatly influenced by U.S. immigration policy. Immigration policy and enforcement affect the health of migrant farmworkers and their access to health education and medical services, as well as the capacity of peer health educators to reach their target audience. As an organization committed to helping farmworker and migrant families to live healthy lives, Migrant Health Promotion supports the following immigration policies.

1. Path to legalization and citizenship for undocumented workers

There are millions of undocumented individuals in the United States, many of whom are employed in agriculture or other physically demanding, low-wage industries. These workers contribute greatly to the U.S. economy in terms of productivity and taxes, often while supporting family members lawfully residing in the United States or living in poverty abroad. These workers live in legal limbo, fearing deportation and/or separation from their families. Last year Congress rejected a comprehensive immigration plan that would have contained a path to citizenship; albeit a path beyond the reach of many undocumented individuals due to its high cost and years-long waiting period. **Migrant Health Promotion supports immigration policies that provide a reasonable and affordable path to legalization and citizenship for undocumented immigrants and demonstrate respect for family unity.**

2. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids

These highly publicized workplace sweeps, while doing little to solve the problem of illegal immigration, create a chilling effect in Latino communities. People who live in fear of ICE raids include not only undocumented individuals themselves, but also their documented family members and friends. People rounded up in raids are typically placed in detention centers and sometimes held for several months in substandard conditions. Family members (even parents and children) are often separated. Some detainees are subjected to irregular trials and deprived of their legal rights, then deported. **Migrant Health Promotion supports a moratorium on ICE raids until humanitarian immigration reforms are adopted.**

3. Border wall

The partially-built, proposed 670-mile barrier on the United States-Mexico border has been shown to do little to deter illegal immigration, yet has serious environmental, humanitarian, and political consequences. The yearly border-crossing death rate has increased ten-fold since construction of the wall began, as immigrants attempt to traverse the inhospitable desert terrain where the wall has not yet been built. The wall disrupts fragile ecosystems and prevents drainage in some border towns, causing disastrous flooding. Located at least 100 yards inside the border, the wall has necessitated the appropriation of lands that, in some cases, have been in the hands of the owning families for generations. Congress has already appropriated \$2.7 billion for this project which costs over \$10 million per mile, and recently approved an additional \$400 million to address cost overruns and finish the project. **Migrant Health Promotion supports a halt to the building of a border wall.**

4. Working and living conditions for domestic and guest agricultural workers

The proposed amendments to the H2A guest worker legislation threaten to roll back the hard-fought gains of migrant farmworkers in terms of decent housing and wages. The H2A changes, if adopted, give growers a financial incentive to hire guest workers over domestic workers, thus placing at risk the livelihood of domestic farmworkers. **Migrant Health Promotion supports the rejection of the proposed changes to H2A regulations and the enforcement of fair housing and wage standards for all farmworkers in the United States.**