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March 22, 2022

Rep. Rob Ecklund, Chair

Labor, Industry, Veterans and Military Affairs Policy and Finance Committee
409 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St Paul, MN 55155

Chair Ecklund and Committee Members:

UFCW Local 1189 represents 10,000 members who work in retail food, food service, food processing, and healthcare. We write today to voice our support for HF 4314 (Hansen), modifying fair labor standards for agricultural and food processing workers.

The Packinghouse Workers bill of rights has not been updated since its enactment in 2007. HF 4314 expands the definition of employer to including poultry processing. It also requires disclosure to employees to be provided in languages preferred by employees upon request. Providing instruction of safety practices in the employee's native language will ensure workplaces are safer and benefit not only the employees but the employers as well. Further, it will allow employees to be informed of their rights as food processing workers and clarifies information provided to employees at the time of hire.

Together, these provisions recognize the invaluable contributions food processing workers provide to our state. During the pandemic, food processing workers rose to the challenge despite many obstacles and a pandemic that impacted this sector and workers acutely. UFCW has been a participant in the governors Committee on the Safety, Health, and Wellbeing of Agricultural and Food Processing Workers for the past year. During this time, the committee engaged in many discussions and fact finding across multiple state agencies, with a focus on the safety and health of food processing workers.

Agriculture and food processing workers provided the public with agricultural products to feed the state during the pandemic, this bill is one small step forward in recognizing their contributions and rights as workers. We strongly encourage the committee to adopt the provisions of this bill to clarify the rights of workers and the responsibilities of employers in food processing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Gleb', is written over a horizontal line.

Jim Gleb