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POLICY BRIEF NO. 5

ECONOMIC HUMAN RIGHTS BUS TOUR

California May 29–31, 2001

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INTRODUCTION

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself (herself) and his (her) family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care and necessary social services...”

—Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 10, 1948

The gap between the richest and poorest Americans continues to widen, dividing the body and soul of this nation. The economic and social policies of the United States government perpetuate these growing income disparities, often in clear violation of the tenets of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the human rights of tens of millions of struggling Americans.

Inspired by the principles embodied in the UDHR, Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy, organized the 2001 Economic Human Rights Bus Tour in California. This tour documented the dire need for government policies that respect, promote, and fulfill the human right of every individual to food, housing, health care, education, and a living wage.

The 2001 Economic Human Rights Bus Tour in California was a part of Food First’s national campaign, *Economic Human Rights: The Time Has Come!*, to spur legislative action that meets the needs of the nation’s poor. The tour called for:

- Truly adequate federal funding for education, health care, and childcare;
- A minimum wage that is a living wage;
- Measures to address the relationship between race and poverty;
- A re-ordering of federal priorities toward meeting the needs of the nation’s poor;
- Ratification of the International Covenant for Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.

In the coming months Food First will continue working with policymakers, and grassroots and community-based organizations to ensure everyone’s right to an adequate standard of living. Our goal is to build a national movement to demand social and economic human rights in the United States.

BACKGROUND

“After the military, I married and worked often three to four different jobs at a time to earn enough money to support my family. I suffered a heart attack in 1989 and now I receive \$691 in social security a month. I pay \$464 for my room. I struggle to get by and don’t have enough money for basic needs like food and clothing. It is unconscionable that there are so many people with even less than me. This isn’t the America I was led to believe existed or could exist.”

—*Richard Only, client at St. Mary’s Center in Oakland, California*

The 2001 Economic Human Rights Bus Tour in California held from May 29–31 drew public attention to growing poverty and hunger in the United States, and to the powerful grassroots campaigns in urban and rural areas that address these injustices. This follow-up to Food First’s successful 1999 Georgia Bus Tour was endorsed by the fifty-six member strong Congressional Progressive Caucus and more than two hundred partner organizations from across the country.

Congressional Representative John Conyers (D-MI) remarked in 1999 that “the most important thing I’ve done this year” was to participate in Food First’s Georgia Bus Tour. In 2001 Rep. Conyers joined us again, along with Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA) and Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA); Carl Pope, Executive Director of the Sierra Club; and Rosalinda Guillen, vice-president of the United Farm Workers, and several other leaders of the civil society. California state legislators, local officials, and the media heard testimonies and policy recommendations directly from grassroots communities and service providers, who called for bolder legislative initiatives and a greater community role in policymaking.

The tour highlighted many of the dynamic campaigns for justice in California and expanded the call for economic human rights to a national level. Site visits and hearings included a downtown Oakland walking tour of low income housing slated for demolition led by Building Opportunities for Self Sufficiency (BOSS), testimonials by non-standard workers and a site tour at San Francisco’s Day Labor Program, and the fields of the Central Coast where the delegation witnessed the United Farm Workers’ fight for fundamental economic human rights to safe housing, safe working conditions, and basic health care.

Many testimonials by community members during the tour revealed the unconscionable reality that violations of people’s basic human rights continue to accelerate in the wealthiest nation on Earth (see Appendix for Testimonials). The bus tour also documented the powerful community-based responses to these injustices and provided a dynamic opportunity to strengthen the national and regional networks coalescing in support of economic human rights for every person.

FINDINGS

Human Right to Food

“I was working full-time at a low-wage job and paying child support—most of my check went to child support. I would buy a little food with the small amount of money left over. Then I lost my job and that was when I was really hungry.

When I came to St. Anthony’s, I was shriveled up. I weighed 125 pounds and I thought I was going to die. Getting food gave me back my self-esteem, my motivation, and my health. Starvation is one problem we should not have in this country.”

—Robert, client at St. Anthony’s Foundation in San Francisco

Robert’s story is not unique. With the world’s largest acreage of arable land, our nation is plagued with hunger in the midst of plenty. In 1998, thirty-six million Americans lived in households that did not have access to enough food to meet their needs.¹

In December 2000, a survey of 25 cities by the U.S. Conference of Mayors showed an increase of 17 percent over the previous year in requests for emergency food assistance, with 83 percent of the cities registering an increase.² According to this survey the leading causes of growing food insecurity are low-paying jobs, high housing costs, unemployment, food stamp cuts, and welfare reform.

The 2001 Economic Human Rights Bus Tour delegation heard the heartbreaking personal stories behind these horrifying statistics. From the Food Bank of Monterey County on California’s Central Coast to St. Anthony’s Foundation in San Francisco, the voices of service providers and community members called out the same message: hunger in the United States is widespread, intolerable, and the time for action is now!

Food Banks are Straining

“Everyone ought to be able to feed themselves without worrying whether to buy food or instead pay for other necessities like rent and medications. If it weren’t for the good bread and the lunches I receive from St. Mary’s Center, I wouldn’t eat very well,” said Lynn Hoberg, a weekly client at the food kitchen and housing services center in downtown Oakland. As the number of hungry Americans steadily increases and the government continues to slash the social safety net, the pressure on soup kitchens and food banks to meet these needs is growing.

In 1998, Second Harvest, the nation’s largest network of Food Banks, fed nearly 10 percent of the U.S. population and still had to turn away several million people. Most of those requesting assistance were children and their parents. The gap left each year by cuts in the federal food stamp program is four times the amount that Second Harvest can provide in a “best case” scenario.³

Food Stamp Program Needs Increased Funding

“There have been months on end, I would only have \$20 to spend on food and often had to go without food. I became so sick due to not having enough to eat that a doctor finally intervened.

I went to apply for food stamps. After filling out pages and pages of forms and spending hours at the Food Stamp office, I was angry to learn that I was only eligible for \$10 in food stamps because the small amount of money that I received in Social Security Disability disqualified me from obtaining any more. My small Disability sum went to pay for my rent, my Medical Co-pay of \$50, utilities, prescription pain medication, transportation, and food. Not having food was a very demeaning experience.”

—*Artensia Barry, former vocational nurse now on Disability due to a chronic medical condition, is a client and volunteer at Alameda County Community Food Bank.*

For nearly four decades food stamps provided a safety net against hunger in the United States, with nearly 80 percent going to families with children. In 1996 the U.S. government cut \$20 billion from the food stamp program under the “welfare reform act.”⁴ A recent study shows that an estimated 12 million people, including approximately six million children, are not receiving food stamps even though they are eligible.⁵

WIC as an Opportunity for Improving the Situation

Another beneficial federal food assistance program known as WIC, the Special Supplemental Nutritional Program for Women, Infants, and Children, has never been fully implemented. WIC has proven to reduce infant mortality, low birth weight, and anemia: the U.S. government saves \$3.50 in future Medicaid and special education costs for each dollar spent on WIC for pregnant women.⁶ But the program has been made available on a limited basis due to funding constraints.

In rural Hollister, the bus tour visited the farm of AMO Organics, where co-founder Diego Vasquez described a program they have developed in conjunction with the local WIC office to ensure that community members have adequate access to healthy and organic food. In San Francisco, the youth educators of the S.F. League of Urban Gardeners (SLUG) shared how they are meeting needs of the local community for healthy food through urban, organic agriculture.

“But its like we’re putting our finger in a dike that’s already exploding all around us,” lamented Paola Zuniga of the Eco-Center in San Francisco’s Mission neighborhood. Paola’s comment expresses the frustration and concern of every single service provider the delegation visited throughout the California bus tour.

Conclusion

The Economic Human Rights delegation found that the food service providers are completely over-stretched, though the need for their vital work grows at a an alarming pace. Across the board, these professionals told us that action is needed to significantly increase government funding for food assistance programs, in conjunction with legislative measures to address the root causes of hunger and food insecurity. These firsthand accounts support Food First's long-held position that a comprehensive and purposeful undertaking by the government of the United States, in principled partnership with service-providers and local communities, is required to remove the malady of hunger in the world's wealthiest nation.

Proposed Recommendations

- Support H.R. 2142/S. 583, the Nutrition Assistance for Working Families and Seniors Act. This bill would provide essential nutritional assistance for America's hard-working families and seniors and reinstate benefits for legal immigrants.
- Support a Farm Bill with comprehensive reform and adequate funding for re-authorization of the Food Stamp program.
- Support adequate funding to serve all women, infants, and children who qualify for the WIC program.
- In California, support AB 989. This bill removes the annual sunset dates for CAPI (Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants) and CFAP (California Food Assistance Program), and allows the continuation of food stamps for low-income immigrants who entered the U.S. legally.
- Support California Assembly Bill 428 and/or AB 144, to allow people eligible for food stamps to own reasonably-valued cars, which are often needed to get to jobs.
- Streamline the application process for food stamps through changes in legislation, regulation, and practices.
- Sponsor legislation that would require schools with 30 percent or more students eligible for free or reduced-price meals to serve school breakfasts.

For more information on these initiatives and recommendations, please contact:

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Human Right to Safe and Affordable Housing

“I became homeless when my landlord decided to make our four unit building into a single family home. My three kids, my fiancé, and myself were forced to move out. My fiancé and I together make a little less than \$30,000 a year, which is not enough to meet our basic expenses and move into a decent apartment for my family in the city. Right now my family is staying at a single-room occupancy hotel. I want to continue to work, live, and raise my kids in San Francisco where I was raised, but I don’t know what we’ll do if this housing crisis doesn’t stop.”

—*Christina Gomez, client advocate with the Homeless Prenatal Program and mother of three children ages 5, 3, and 1. She has lived in San Francisco since she was four years old.*

The harsh reality faced by Christina Gomez and her family is just one example of the national housing epidemic that is forcing families to choose between feeding their families and paying their rent—resulting in increasing displacement and homelessness. In California, only 56 percent of tenants are able to afford the Fair Market Rent according to estimations by the U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD).⁷ Nationally, only one in four eligible households received any federal housing assistance in the year 2000.⁸

On a walking tour of low-income housing sites in downtown Oakland, Darren Noy of Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (BOSS), spoke to the root causes of the crisis, “Real wages are declining while rents increase. Coupled with state and federal reduction of housing aid and housing construction, this leads us to the current housing squeeze that’s forcing our community members into crisis.” In fact, federal funding has dropped significantly over the last twenty years. In the mid-1990s, Congress cut-off any new supply of Section 8 vouchers.⁹

The delegation met many individuals and families facing a housing crisis who are working full-time jobs, and often working more than one job. In Alameda County, the hourly wage required to reasonably afford a modest one-bedroom apartment at HUD’s Fair Market Rent is \$15.10. This would require a minimum wage worker to work 105 hours per week to afford housing.¹⁰

The Crisis in Rural California... and a Promising Model

Food First’s delegation found the situation to be just as severe in rural California. Community members in Hollister, Davenport, Salinas, and Watsonville continually cited affordable housing as their biggest concern. Juan Uranga, director of the Center for Community Advocacy (CCA) in Salinas, detailed the unsafe and inhumane living conditions that many workers face—many living without indoor plumbing, electricity, or running water. Government policies further complicate matters by denying undocumented immigrants assistance to meet their basic human right to housing.

In response, CCA has built a broad and powerful regional coalition of growers, workers, and elected officials to promote home ownership for farm workers. Recognizing that safe and

affordable housing is central to the health of workers, their families, and thus the regional economy, this unique coalition has secured public and private funds for self-organized communities of workers to design, build, and own their houses.

Conclusion

Food First's delegation found persistent and widespread violations of Californians' right to safe and affordable housing. An inadequate supply of affordable rental units, coupled with skyrocketing rents and stagnating wages, have resulted in displacement and extreme financial hardship for many. Immediate government action is needed to significantly increase funding for affordable rental housing and affordable home ownership initiatives. Legislative measures such as the ones below must be taken to ensure that every American's basic human right to housing is protected.

Proposed Recommendations

- Increase federal and state spending on housing assistance, including the expansion of Section 8 programs.
- Pass the Public Housing Protection Act, providing for one-to-one replacement of all HUD housing units demolished by the federal government.
- Support federal funding of the Community Housing Investment Trust, which would subsidize the building of one million new homes nationwide for those making \$10,700 a year or less.
- Put teeth into state and federal fair share housing requirements.
- In California, support SB 1227 (Burton), ensuring adequate funding for programs to assist working families with rental costs and down payment assistance.
- In California, raise to 35 percent the percentage of property tax generated within a redevelopment area that goes to affordable and very affordable housing. Current state law requires at least 20 percent.
- Increase funding of loans for low-income residents to purchase housing.

For more information on these initiatives and recommendations, please contact:

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Human Right to Health Care

“When Anacomp downsized my job I lost my health insurance and I wasn't able to get my medications or see the doctor. You see, I was diagnosed with severe psoriasis when I was 21. It started slowly, but it progressed until it was all over my body, and it's really resistant to treatment.

If you're sick or you have a disease, you should be able to get insurance, no questions asked. I wish that someone could find a cure for my condition, but until they do, I need to see the doctor and get the medications and treatments I need."

—*Rene Castillo is forty-three years old and lives in San Francisco.*

Rene Castillo's dilemma is all too common in the United States. Access to health care is recognized as a human right under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, yet an estimated 44.3 million Americans live without basic health insurance. Food First's delegation heard testimony from community members and health care practitioners in rural and urban California, suggesting that the health care system in the United States is courting disaster. The 2001 Economic Human Rights Bus Tour also visited communities in California that are organizing to ensure their human right to environmental health, as recently recognized by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

The American health care system is the most expensive in the world, consuming 14 percent of the national income as compared to an average of eight percent for other industrialized countries. However, unlike these other countries, one out of six of the population is left without health insurance.¹¹ In California, 21.3 percent of residents are without health insurance and 19 percent of children are uninsured.¹² Those who are gainfully employed comprise 85 percent of uninsured adults.¹³

Our delegation found that even those with health insurance are at-risk due to the dangerously low quality of medical attention provided as a result of understaffing. The United States has steadily declined in the quality of care provided, dropping to 25th among the world's nations in rates of infant mortality and life expectancy.¹⁴ While the Patients' Bill of Rights may provide some improved protections for those with health insurance, it will not help the millions uninsured or tens of millions more—including chronically ill patients paying exorbitant premiums—that are underinsured.

Overall, the delegation found the public health care system to suffer from an insufficient number of hospital beds and understaffing at all levels, sometimes resulting in the risky practice of employing unqualified personnel. Inadequate resources exist for substance abuse treatment and drug rehabilitation. Mental health services are seriously lacking. According to Frances Payne of Neighbor-to-Neighbor, 50 percent of community members seeking mental health treatment in San Francisco last year did not receive any.

Race, Class, and the Crisis in Youth Health Care Coverage

"I have no medical insurance; nothing except for the free health services. I just got sent a bill from General Hospital and I don't know how I am going to pay it. I really don't."

—*June, a young woman living in an SRO hotel in the Tenderloin*

The latest figures show that 10.8 million children in the United States under 18 years of age lack health coverage.¹⁵ Our delegation heard testimonies that support these statistics and found that this right is violated more routinely among communities of color and low-income communities. One out of six Black children and one out of four Latino children were uninsured in 1999, compared with one out of eleven white children. The Bureau of the Census determined that children who live in families with incomes less than \$26,500 were more than twice as likely to be uninsured as children in families with higher family incomes.¹⁶

However, a promising statistic suggests that there are programs that can improve the situation: one million fewer lower-income children were uninsured in 1999 than in the previous year.¹⁷ These numbers suggest that outreach efforts under the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) are making progress in increasing coverage. Unfortunately, in California the state government has neglected to spend an estimated \$590 million in funds for CHIP from its 1998 allotment.¹⁸ With more than 1.5 million children uninsured, this is an unconscionable example of mismanagement and neglect.

Human Right to a Healthy Environment

"Health is an area where the gap between rich and poor is tragically evident. Study after study has shown that the root causes of poor health are largely economic. Lower income groups often live in substandard housing and are exposed to contamination and environmental factors that contribute to serious illness."

—*Frances Payne, a nurse practitioner and San Francisco-based representative of Neighbor-to-Neighbor*

At the April 2001 meeting of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, the commission concluded that living free from toxic pollution and environmental degradation is a basic human right. "Environmental conditions clearly help to determine the extent to which people enjoy their basic rights to health, adequate food and housing, and traditional livelihood and culture," added Klaus Toepfer, director of the United Nations Environment Program.¹⁹ This historic decision follows years of work by community-based organizations worldwide to address the health impacts of disproportionate siting of waste facilities, pesticide usage, and other environmental hazards in low-income communities of color.

During our visit to Bayview-Hunter's Point in San Francisco, a predominantly African-American neighborhood, Dana Lanza, director of Literacy for Environmental Justice, told the delegation, "We are host to 325 toxic sites within a three mile radius. It's no wonder that 20 percent of our children have asthma, and breast cancer rates here are twice the rate in the rest of the Bay Area." City Supervisor Sophie Maxwell recently declared an Environmental Health State of Emergency in the Bayview-Hunter's Point. This will commit a variety of resources to the situation and is a positive step in taking this health crisis seriously.

Conclusion

“Our system should be able to deliver prompt primary care services without weeks or months of delay for an appointment. We need to have more health promotion, disease prevention and management programs, better health education in our schools, and alternatives to the emergency department for those who are substance-addicted.”

—*Dr. Marc Snyder, director of Emergency Services at St. Luke’s Hospital, San Francisco*

A healthy population is vitally necessary for a vibrant and participatory democracy. The 2001 Economic Human Rights Bus Tour delegation found sweeping violations of the human right to basic health care and environmental health. Meaningful legislation must be enacted immediately to ensure health coverage for every single American and protect the population from environmental contaminants. A variety of well-researched solutions exist, some of which are included below, that can be undertaken to ensure the health and well-being of every individual.

Proposed Recommendations

- Ensure basic health care coverage for every American through a single-payer system found in most industrialized nations.
- Immediately support increased funding for a significant expansion of the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP).
- Support S. 582, the Immigrant Children’s Health Improvement Act, giving states the option to cover legal immigrant children and pregnant women through CHIP and Medicaid, affecting approximately 130, 000 children and 50, 000 women per year.
- In California, support AB 969 (Chan), creating a plan to extend services to all Californians on a sliding scale, and AB 843 (Chan) making it easier to sign up for free health insurance.
- Oppose the privatization of medical care. Medical Savings Accounts are not the answer.
- Support initiatives to mitigate the use of pesticides and encourage organic farming.
- Support funding for increased health promotion, disease prevention and management programs, and better health education in our schools.
- Require employers using pesticides to provide appropriate protection for workers.
- In California, support the universal health care study process as called for in SB 480. Signed into law by Governor Davis in 1999, SB 480 requires the Department of Health and Human Services to examine options for providing health care to the entire population and the results of this study must be acted upon by the legislature. A key component of the process is that it must be open to public participation and scrutiny, thus involving all interested parties.

For more information on these initiatives and recommendations, please contact:

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FOOD FIRST

Institute for Food and Development Policy

Policy Brief

Human Right to Education

“Our school buildings are falling apart. Our children are dealing everyday with asbestos, lead paint chips, no soap or paper towels in bathrooms, broken windows, no handrails, too few of the outdated textbooks for students to bring home to study, very large class sizes, and unhealthy food.”

—*Sandra Estrada works at the Community Bridges Beacon Center, and the mother of three children*

Access to a quality education is a basic human right under international law, but equal educational opportunity is a myth in today’s America. The abysmal condition of Sandra Estrada’s school is symptomatic of a national epidemic of neglect and dysfunction—especially in low-income, inner-city schools. During the 2001 Economic Human Rights Bus Tour, Food First’s delegation witnessed egregious violations of the human right to a quality education.

Public schools in America have long been touted as our democracy’s window to equal opportunity, but in low-income communities that window is increasingly shut and in disrepair. The Children’s Defense Fund has documented that the richest school districts in the United States spend 56 percent more per student than do the poorest.²⁹ Last year, the American Civil Liberties Union sued the state of California for allowing certain schools to function in a dilapidated state while other schools enjoyed state of the art facilities and access to materials.

The Impact of Inadequate Funding

“California is a case study for the national crisis,” said John Avalos, Director of District Organizing at Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth. “California’s public school system has been on a downward spiral since the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978. Prop. 13 dramatically cut the state’s funding resources for education and made it impossible to offer students the rich educational experience they’d enjoyed before 1978.”

Food First’s delegation found that this lack of funding negatively impacts all of the critical and interconnected areas affecting children’s development—from the physical setting of the school sites to staffing and class sizes, and from the number of available textbooks to childcare that can support young people’s social and mental health.

“Yes, our job is rewarding, but we need a lot more support. We need a learning environment that allows us to meet the needs of these children. They’re engaged but they don’t have books, much less computers, and the buildings are falling down around them,” commented Sarah Bolden, a teacher at Everett Middle School in San Francisco. California ranks worst of all the fifty states in percentage of schools with at least one inadequate environmental factor, and third worst in percentage of schools with at least one inadequate building feature.³⁰

Teachers told our delegation that overcoming a deficient learning environment is, by itself, a challenge that is difficult but surmountable. However, the situation is unbearable when coupled

with the large class sizes that are standard practice today. In California, 93 percent of reading classes have more than 20 students, while nationally the average is a dismal 78 percent.³¹ Class sizes of 35 children or more are not unusual.

“It was just plain impossible to meet the needs of all 28 of my students. When half of them were pulled out for a special class we’d make some progress, but when they returned it was just too overwhelming. And I had one of the smaller classes in the school. Even the very best teachers are in triage mode these days.

I came into teaching thinking the problem was that we needed better teachers. I left convinced that what we really need is to dramatically cut class sizes and get these young people the personal attention they deserve. Anything less and we’re failing these kids.”

—*Andy Moffitt, taught sixth grade at Pio Pico Elementary School and fifth grade at J.P. Cornelius Magnet Elementary School*

Childcare in Crisis

One area of opportunity for meeting young people’s developmental needs is through childcare. A recent major study found that children in high quality childcare demonstrated greater mathematical ability, greater thinking and attention skills, and fewer behavioral problems than children in lower quality care. These differences held true for children from a broad range of family backgrounds, with particularly significant effects for children at risk.³²

However, our delegation found that working families in California experience widespread difficulty in finding and affording quality childcare. Full-day childcare costs \$4,000 to \$10,000 per year, yet one out of three families with young children earns less than \$25,000 per year.³³ Even though some childcare subsidies are available for low-income families, funds are severely limited. Nationally, only one out of ten eligible children who need help are getting any assistance.³⁴

Successful Models for Meeting Children’s Needs

“My grades have come from F’s to A’s. There were family problems in my home including divorce and alcoholism which my father was caught-up in. Too much of being in that situation would have had a bad effect on my future. I had no choice but to live at the BOSS Youth Housing Program after living with a family member for a couple of weeks. It allowed me a stable enough situation to bring my grades up.”

—*Andrew Baker, 18 years old and just graduated from Berkeley High School*

Proven programs and successful models do exist, though they uniformly lack funding for full implementation. Our delegation visited the Community Bridges Beacon Center in San Francisco to learn more about the program’s use of public school facilities to provide tutoring, computer classes, ESL courses, youth leadership opportunities, citizenship classes, family counseling, parent education, and other services to the surrounding community.

Partially funded through a unique citizen-driven municipal initiative, the Beacons have been tremendously successful in supporting the health and engagement of young people by strategically leveraging the limited resources of neighborhood service providers. It is important to note that every student, teacher, and parent we met at the Beacon Center bemoaned the poor condition of the building and the overcrowding of daytime classes at the host school.

Though the success of Head Start has been extensively documented, after nearly 35 years of investment the program is still under-funded and serves slightly less than half of the eligible children.³⁵ Less well known is the success of programs like the Youth House in Berkeley in meeting the needs of homeless students. Administered by Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (BOSS), this residential program offers services that enable young people to be academically and socially successful. The program's success flies in the face of the flawed legislation co-sponsored by Senator Boxer that seeks to segregate homeless children in separate schools as an attempt at supporting their development.

Conclusion

The delegation found that immediate and significant action is needed to address violations of millions of young people's human right to equal educational opportunity. The crisis in America's public schools continues to deepen, especially for low-income communities and communities of color. Proven models and successful programs do exist, but funding is woefully inadequate. A re-ordering of national priorities is needed to ensure that there is funding to support every single young person's basic human right to a high quality education. The health of our democracy depends upon such necessary action.

Proposed Recommendations

- Support the Leave No Child Behind Act introduced by Senator Dodd and Representative Miller, which incorporates many policies and programs proven to improve children's lives, including providing for full funding of childcare and Head Start for 3–4 year olds so that all eligible children can participate.
- Ensure a permanent and steady infusion of funding for the public school system. In California, amend the corporate tax provisions of Proposition 13 and institute progressive tax measures.
- Support HR 17, the Younger Americans Act, which would ensure that all youth have access to positive development activities in their community.
- Support measures to significantly address school funding equity and ensure the same high standard of education and school facilities for all students.
- Mandate class size of 20 students or less for all grade levels and provide adequate funding to meet the corresponding increase in number of teachers needed.
- Initiate a five-year program to fully fund the subsidized childcare system. At least half of the new childcare should be based in subsidized centers in low-income neighborhoods in order to promote access to quality childcare in areas most in need.

- Ensure that subsidized childcare programs are high quality and enhance children's readiness for school by mandating a rigorous evaluation component, a method for making programs accountable, and a fiscal incentive structure that promotes the provision of quality care.
- Increase efforts to resolve the classroom teacher and childcare staffing crises by allocating targeted support for staff salary increases and retention efforts.
- Veto legislation co-sponsored by Senator Boxer that would effectively segregate homeless students from the general student population.

For more information on these initiatives and recommendations, please contact:

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Workers' Rights

"I was paid \$8 an hour and had no benefits. Manpower said they offered a benefits program but the premiums were way too high given the hourly wage. With the costs of housing being so high, I didn't know anybody at work who could afford those benefits. There were around 900 people doing assembly work like me at the plant. We were all Manpower temporary workers hired to make Hewlett Packard printers."

—Raj, a temporary worker in the Silicon Valley region of California

In the last twenty years, workers have seen the steady erosion of their basic human right to a living wage, health benefits, and the right to unionize. From the Day Labor Program in San Francisco to the United Farm Workers in Watsonville, workers in different regions of California engaged in different occupations, all told a tale similar to Raj's. Adjusting for inflation, the average weekly wages for workers are 12 percent less than they were in 1973 when Richard Nixon was President.²⁰ Our findings indicate that the internationally recognized right to "just and favorable conditions of work" is being violated for millions of Americans.

Permanent, long-term employment with good wages and benefits is increasingly being replaced with non-standard or contingent work. The terms "non-standard" and "contingent" refer to various forms of employment including temporary, contract, day labor, freelance, and part-time. In California employment at temporary agencies has risen 150 percent since 1984, reflecting the national situation in which there are now more than 5.6 million workers holding contingent jobs.²¹ These workers toil without job security, without health or other benefits, and often for low pay.

On August 22, 1996, President Clinton signed into law the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, better known as Welfare Reform. This devastating legislation cut off billions of dollars in benefits to poor people and forced millions of former welfare recipients

into contingent or non-standard employment. While welfare rolls have steadily declined since 1996, most former welfare recipients continue to live in poverty while working jobs with very low wages and no benefits.²² Research shows that nationally two out of five former recipients neither have jobs nor currently receive cash assistance, many worse off than before the law was enacted.²³

Widespread Violations of Immigrant Workers' Rights

"I have to take care of my kids, feed all of us now, and keep a roof over our heads. And so, we work for whatever people are willing to pay us. We need to survive. We are hired for a job, and we will do it.

Our basic economic human rights have been violated many times. I expected more when I came to the United States."

—*Amada, the mother of three children, is from Oaxaca, Mexico and an ethnic Triqui, living in the Central Coast region of California*

Since its founding, the United States has relied on the steady flow of immigrants to work in the lowest-paid, least desirable jobs. Immigrant labor and guestworker programs, have been a cornerstone of the nation's labor supply since World War II. The first guestworker program, the Bracero program, granted temporary visas to between four and five million Mexican citizens for seasonal agricultural work in the States. A Department of Labor officer in charge of the Bracero program referred to it as "legalized slavery."²⁴

Due to the administrative and bureaucratic costs of the current agricultural guestworker program, H-2A, the program has never been widely used and the industry instead relies on undocumented workers. These workers sustain the American economy but are incredibly vulnerable to violations of their rights due to their precarious immigration status. Agricultural workers in Watsonville, Hollister, Davenport, and Salinas told Food First's delegation about jobs with no overtime, filled with hazardous conditions, and paying less than minimum wage.

Need for a Minimum Wage to be a Living Wage

"Tens of thousands of people work full-time in San Francisco and still live in poverty. Anyone who works full-time should be paid enough to support their family without having to rely on the taxpayers or charity to make it through the month.

Paying a living wage is the right thing to do morally and economically. No job should pay less than it costs to survive. It's a matter of basic fairness."

—*Karl Kramer, director of the San Francisco Living Wage Coalition*

Recognizing that the federal minimum wage is insufficient for the survival needs of a family, more than fifty cities and towns in the United States have enacted their own improved wage standards. The San Francisco Living Wage Coalition recently won approval of a \$9 per hour minimum for 21,000 city workers, with increases to follow at the end of 2001 and beyond. Opponents of

increasing the minimum wage typically predict a range of negative consequences but these fears cannot be supported by the data:

- A ballot initiative in Oregon raised the minimum wage in 1996 to \$5.50 and then to \$6.50 in 1999. Not only did workers' real income increase despite inflation, but data showed that unemployment simultaneously fell and the proportion of welfare recipients moving into employment actually rose from 1996 onward.²⁵
- The federal minimum wage was raised in two stages, in 1996 and 1997, to a level of \$5.15. Opponents of the increase made dire predictions of job losses, but during that period unemployment came down steadily, and most dramatically among the very groups most affected by the minimum wage—minorities, teenagers, and people without college degrees. In 1999, the unemployment rate among Black men hit its lowest level ever.²⁶

While raises in the minimum wage are absolutely critical to meet the needs of America's working families, Karl Kramer and several other living wage advocates reminded the delegation that the necessary goal is to institute a living wage for all workers. The National Priorities Project (NPP) defines a living wage as the minimum amount required to meet a household's basic needs, based on HUD's Fair Market Rent figures and other government data. The NPP recently determined that a living wage for a family of three in California would be \$17.27 per hour—still quite far from the significant headway made by the more than 50 local coalitions mentioned above.²⁷

The gains that can result from paying workers a living wage go well beyond simply increasing their ability to pay their basic expenses. A recent study by the San Francisco Department of Health estimated that requiring contractors to pay city workers a living wage would prevent 229 deaths per year among those 16 to 64 years old and reduce the risk of premature death by one-third. According to the same Department of Health study, a living wage for full-time working parents would more than double their children's likelihood of graduating from high school.²⁸ Unions from HERE Local 2 to Teamsters 890 and from SEIU 535 to the United Farm Workers joined the tour to support the national call for a living wage for all workers.

Human Right to Form and Join Trade Unions

“The owner paid everyone a week late, and when I was paid the check was more than 10 hours short. But I always did as the supervisor told me because I needed the money. Last year after some of the workers complained to the Department of Labor, the contractor held a meeting and threatened us. He said that if any workers did him any harm, we would all be harmed even more.

I have never been a member of a union but I know they help the workers. Last month a Teamsters representative introduced several of us to a lawyer and last week we filed a class action lawsuit to get all of the workers the overtime pay we are entitled to.”

—*Andres, full-time worker who lives with his family in the Salinas area*

The union movement in the United States has played a vital role in addressing the daily violations of workers' human rights, including the right to just and favorable conditions of employment. Though the human right to form and join a trade union for the protection of economic interests is internationally recognized, Food First's delegation found widespread violations of this right. Workers in Oakland, San Francisco, South San Francisco, San Jose, Santa Cruz county, and Monterey County described intimidation and firings intended to block the organizing of workers for their basic human rights.

Chito Cuellar of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE) Local 2 in San Francisco detailed the frequent threats of firing and worse by the management of the Marriot Hotel to discourage low-wage workers in the hotels from joining the union. Paula Placencia described the exploitation faced by her and her co-workers at Valley Pre-Cut until the improvements that came along with their winning of a union election to join Teamsters Local 890 and the subsequent contract negotiations. Each of these workers, and many others who testified, stressed that their interests are in achieving the human rights and health of their co-workers, not in hurting the businesses for which they work.

Conclusion

The 2001 Economic Human Rights Bus Tour found egregious, widespread violations of workers' basic human rights in California. Fortunately there are numerous campaigns and legislative initiatives being advanced by organizations and coalitions that can remedy aspects of the situation. Our delegation found an immediate need for elected officials to take action to guarantee and implement workers' rights as ensured in numerous international treaties and covenants.

Proposed Recommendations

- Support H.R. 4353, the Federal Living Wage Responsibility Act, introduced by Congressman Luis Gutierrez. This would require for-profit firms holding a federal contract worth at least \$10,000 to pay all employees working on that contract a minimum \$8.20 an hour. This would raise the wages of at least 11 percent of federal contract workers.
- Support the Universal Living Wage Campaign through federal legislation that would tie the minimum wage to a formula allowing people to afford the cost of housing in different parts of the country—at least an efficiency apartment. The formula is based on HUD's Fair Market Rent figures that are adjusted annually and would ensure that people spend no more than 30 percent of their income on housing.
- Conduct hearings on the re-authorization of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and take action to address the negative impacts of "welfare reform" upon low-income community members.
- Expand eligibility for unemployment insurance benefits for contingent workers.
- Expand the number of family-based immigration visas.
- In California, support AB 423/SB 1125, which would extend the protections of workers defrauded by farm labor contractors.

- Support California AB 638, requiring written contracts between growers and the farm labor contractors they hire.
- Increase the state minimum wage and adopt local living wage ordinances.

For more information on these recommendations and initiatives, please contact:

Living Wage Coalition, San Francisco—Karl Kramer (415) 243-8133
sflivingwage@usa.net

United Farm Workers—Rosalinda Guillen (916) 341-0612
sqwrl@igc.org

Coalition for Ethical Welfare Reform—Martina Gillis (415) 239-5099
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CALL TO ACTION

Food First is taking steps to spur legislative action on the findings and testimonials documented in this report. The report of the Economic Human Rights Bus Tour has been distributed to Congressional and California state committee chairs, calling on them to conduct hearings on the findings and take immediate and significant action as recommended.

Thanks to a collaborative effort with the Alameda County Community Food Bank, a preliminary draft of the report has already secured our first hearing in California. Assembly Member Wilma Chan (D-Oakland) has committed to conducting a hearing this fall 2001 on child hunger in California. We will be doing extensive follow-up with elected officials to secure further hearings.

Food First will continue to strengthen the relationships developed and furthered during the 2001 Economic Human Rights Bus Tour by supporting the ongoing campaigns of the participating organizations. Early examples of this work include providing support to the San Francisco Day Labor Program's struggle for a permanent site and phone banking to help the Living Wage Coalition secure new health care guarantees for city workers.

Principled coalition work of this nature, linking all sectors of civil society, is driving the growing movement for Economic Human Rights in the United States. Food First is proud to be playing a significant role in this work and we look forward to your participation and support.

For more information on our national campaign, *Economic Human Rights: The Time Has Come!*, please contact us (510) 654-4400 x233, www.foodfirst.org

APPENDICES

Testimonials

Richard Only, veteran and client at St. Mary's Center in Oakland

My name is Richard Only and I am 57 years old. I am from a very poor family and chose to go into the army after high school instead of using a four-year scholarship to college. When I left the military in 1966 I was unable to find meaningful work. I then returned and served seven years in Vietnam.

When I left the military and came back to the United States I didn't know how to plan for my future. I'd been traumatized and had no idea how bad off I was. I was very depressed and had an alcohol problem that began while in the army. The military ignored the trauma of war and problems created by easy access to drugs and alcohol. Too many lives have been lost as a result. Every service person has a right to help with re-entry and re-education to establish a healthy life

After the military I married and worked often three to four different jobs at a time to earn enough money to support my family. I worked as a cook, cab driver, and for the census bureau and the City of Oakland. I helped to organize the Veterans' Association at Laney College. I also counseled emotionally disturbed children but was not able to get a promotion due to my limited formal education.

I suffered a heart attack in 1989. I had health insurance from my employment, however, I knew many poor people my age who were not eligible for insurance and fell through the cracks. I could easily be one of the people staying in our city parks that have become homes for people who suffer mental health problems. These problems are being created by a lack of access to basic necessities. The people who suffer are being ignored.

I receive \$691 in social security a month and I pay \$464 for my room. I live in a shared situation since its impossible to afford my own place. I struggle to get by and don't have enough money for basic needs like clothing. It is unconscionable that there are so many people with even less than me.

I am doing what I can to help myself now, however, when I look around my community I'm disillusioned and fear for the future of America.

This isn't the America I was led to believe existed or could exist. I'm ashamed that America as the wealthiest nation in our worldwide community doesn't uphold each person's right to have their basic needs met.

Artensia Barry, volunteer and client at Alameda County Community Food Bank

I live in Berkeley and I am 46 years old. I'm originally from Redding, California. I have a degree in Business Administration and worked as an administrative assistant for 20 years while I was working toward a degree as a Licensed Vocational Nurse. I worked as a nurse in the Bay Area for ten years before being diagnosed with *Hidradentitis Suppurativa*, a painful and often debilitating inflammation of the sebaceous glands. This is a rare disease that is chronic, static, and incurable. Now I depend on Social Security Disability as my sole source of income. When I did work, I was commanding a good wage and working double shifts.

I became involved with the Alameda County Community Food Bank through one of their member agencies, the Emeryville Community Action Program (ECAP), where I was both a client and a volunteer. I actually started volunteering at ECAP and then the Food Bank because I had always wanted to do something for the community and thought that getting out to talk to people would help me feel better. The food assistance that I received there was helpful. I applied for food stamps and only received ten dollars. There wasn't anyone around to help as far as food was concerned so I was doing without. Volunteering, I no longer isolated myself, which helped me come out of a depression and take my mind off of the physical and psychological pain of my disease....being around people and knowing that I was able to do something to help them and myself.

I have experienced hunger many times. There have been months on end, I would only have \$20 to spend on food and often had to go without food; that \$20 included food, toilet papers, everything. I became so sick, due to not having enough food that a doctor intervened. I went to apply for food stamps. After filling out pages and pages of forms and spending hours at the Food Stamp office, I was angry to learn that I was only eligible for \$10 in food stamps because the \$719 that I received in Social Security Disability was too much. This \$719 went to pay for my rent, my Medical Co-pay of \$50, utilities, prescription pain medication, transportation, and food. Not having food was a very demeaning experience. Even if there had been someone to ask for help, I wouldn't have asked.

Melinda Cooper, resident at the Oakland Homeless Project

My name is Melinda Cooper. I was born and raised in San Diego in a small middle class, white family. My parents are both academics and I was expected to go to college and have a bright future. My diagnosis is bi-polar II. I am 37 years old, divorced with one son.

I am a classic example of the saying "It could happen to anyone." I tried five times to make it through college and because of my illness and the ups and downs it caused I was never able to make much headway.

I have been a working person since age 15. I married at 23 and had my son at age 24. Post-partum depression became clinical depression and I was divorced by age 25. I struggled along

with depression until age 29. At that point it became so severe that I could not get out of bed. I had to seek professional help, therapy, and finally psychiatric medication.

For the last eight years I have tried to work as much as I could and spend as much time as possible with my son. Unfortunately there have been periods of time as long as a year when I could not function because of my illness. Over and over I found myself with no job, no money, and no home. Over and over family and friends helped me to keep going.

My last job was doing graphic design. I loved it! After several months on the job I had an episode of severe depression. I could no longer work. My family and savings kept me going for two months. At the end of those months I was still severely depressed. I had exhausted all help from family and friends. I had no income, no home, no medical insurance, and I was unable to care for myself. I did not know about any assistance for people in my situation and I was afraid I would be living in my car. You can imagine how upsetting and humiliating it would be to tell my son, "Sweetheart, mommy is living in her car now."

It was my great good fortune that a friend told me about Mental Health Advocates, and I went to them for help. From there I went to John George Psychiatric Hospital, Woodrow Place Residential Crisis Program, and finally to Oakland Homeless Project, which is where I am now. These programs have provided me with medical care, food, shelter and support. I hate to think where I would be without them!

Imagine a 37 year old, very depressed woman, trying to survive in her car. It's not a pretty sight. These programs also helped me to apply for the limited help that is available. I now receive General Assistance (about \$300 per month) and \$75 per month in food stamps. I have also applied for SSI. If I receive it, I can expect about \$700 per month. If you live in the Bay Area, you know that I could not possibly afford to rent even a studio. Many of the lists for subsidized housing are a two-year waiting list!

I'm not sure what comes next. It is a very uncertain future with a mental health problem and very little income. I thank God for the programs that are available as well as the people that have the vision and heart to make them happen.

Paula Placencia, worker, member Teamsters 890 and *Lideres Campesinas*

My name is Paula Placencia. I was born in Mexico and came to the United States, without papers, when I was 25 years old. I worked in the fields in Yuma, Arizona, cutting cauliflower and thinning and hoeing, as well harvesting cucumbers, tomatoes, and chilies in the San Joaquin Valley. One time I was injured and unable to work for over a month. The contractor never paid me any worker's compensation, and I didn't know I could get anything without having papers.

In 1980 I started working at Coronet Foods, a salad processing plant in El Centro and Salinas, California. I worked at the plant in Salinas in the summer, and in El Centro, 500 miles south, in

the winter. About 75 people worked at each plant. The company paid us the minimum wage, without medical insurance. The only benefit they ever paid was vacation pay to those of us who worked all year. One of the supervisors was always going up to the women workers, telling them how pretty they were and asking them out. The women who didn't go along with him would get moved to harder jobs, and get yelled at to work faster. None of the workers knew about the sexual harassment laws, or that we could do anything about this kind of treatment.

About spring of 1990, after the work had started in Salinas, the supervisor John Kelly decided to save money and laid off four of us, who were older, and had been there long enough that we were being paid two or three weeks vacation each year. He hired new people at minimum wage the following week. He never hired us back.

In 1994 five of my co-workers and I got new jobs at a new salad processing company in Salinas that had just opened. It was called Valley Pre-Cut. About 70 people got hired at Valley Pre-Cut, and I continued working there for about a year without any problems. Then in 1995 Valley Pre-Cut hired John Kelley and his wife Lupe to be our supervisors. Right away things got worse. There was more favoritism, with some workers started being sent home earlier, and the company stopped paying us when the machinery broke down and we had to wait for it to get fixed. The other workers and I who had been fired by the Kellys at Coronet Foods decided that we had better do something before they decided to fire us again.

One of the women working at Valley Pre-Cut had been a member of the Teamsters Union at another salad plant, and she set up a meeting for us to talk to a union organizer. We had several meetings and collected signatures from about 80 percent of the employees. A month later we won our union election, and started negotiating our contract. I was elected by the other workers to be on the negotiating committee.

After seven months of negotiations we signed our first contract. We got things like paid sick days, vacations, some paid holidays, and modest wage increases. Two years ago, in the second contract, the union negotiated a 401(k) plan and family medical insurance coverage. Instead of us getting fired, the Kellys were terminated, and went back to Coronet Foods.

In 1997 the union got me a leave of absence for union business, and I was assigned to work for a year with the Citizenship Project, helping people get their American citizenship. I also started volunteering with *Lideres Campesinas*, talking to farmworkers about pesticides and how to protect themselves. Today I work full time with *Lideres Campesinas*, organizing meetings and training farmworkers about pesticides and how to defend their own rights on the job.

Freeman Davis, veteran and client at Oakland Homeless Project

My name is Freeman Davis. I'm a 71 year old disabled veteran and I'm homeless. I served my country well and now I do not have enough income to rent an apartment. I worked for 48 years as a machinist and helped build the Alaska pipeline. It wasn't easy.

In 1994, the police came to my place. They didn't knock, they just started banging. They kicked the door in, the whole frame fell in. The landlord billed me \$3000 for the door and I was evicted. I wasn't able to pay the \$3000. Since then I haven't been able to find housing because of my bad credit. I'm tired of all the rat race. I suffer from high blood pressure and have had two heart attacks already. I am just looking for a place where I can live in peace.

I've been homeless ever since 1994. It's a tough break for a senior citizen. I turned 71 in March. In 1994, I was using but I've been clean and sober for the past two years.

I only get \$700 per month for old age social security and I get \$100 per month for fighting in the Vietnam War. They didn't give me anything for my back, my chest, or my mind which were injured after they drafted me. I do not receive enough money to feed myself everyday. They are still trying to figure out a rating for me to get more money for my injuries. I've been waiting for that since 1987.

I became disabled in 1977 on the Alaska pipeline and I haven't been able to work since. They told me to have patience; they say they are working on a rating for more money for me. But we all know what they have been waiting for all this time. They are waiting for me to die. A couple of times I tried to kill myself because they kept denying me.

I lived in a van for seven years. I attended meetings five days a week at St. Mary's Center. They were recovery meetings for senior citizens. I attended these meetings for two years while living in my van.

Living in the van was tough. I suffered with mental depression and PTSD (post-traumatic stress syndrome). There was a lot of pressure. I would hear voices and always be afraid. Sometimes people would break into my van. They knew I was attending St. Mary's senior center meetings, so they knew when I wouldn't be there. They took a portable TV from me and a lot of clothes.

Then the state impounded my van. It needed a transmission and I didn't have enough money to fix it. My van was taken one day when I wasn't there.

I kept coming to Oakland Homeless Project. God is a good God, so they accepted me to Oakland Homeless Project two days after I lost my van. I have been here for two months now. The Oakland Homeless Project helps me by being a place for me to sleep and eat and lay my head. I feel more comfortable here than in my van. I know this is a clean and sober place and I feel real good about that.

But I don't know what I'm going to do after the 20th of July when my time is up here. I'm going to try to get into the Satellite Senior Homes, but they won't give me an interview until the 17th of July. So I have only three days.

Amada Hernandez, mother and client of the Citizenship Project in Salinas

My name is Amada Hernandez. I have three children and am a homemaker. I am from Oaxaca, Mexico and an ethnic Triqui. My Spanish is very limited, and I can write my name but nothing more. I do not speak English.

The Citizenship Project arrived at my house to assist me during a terrifying event—officials of the INS broke into my home and took with them my grandfather and others that live with us. The Citizenship Project helped us a lot, bringing us food, clothing, and money. They connected us with other organizations and agencies like WIC, and with family members from the community. They have helped us with clothing and shoe sizes. This is especially helpful for our men who work in the fields with horaches and can get infections from toxic chemicals that enter their body through their feet.

Also, the Catholic Church of Saint Mary's has collected money, clothing, and food for us. With the help of the Citizenship Project, we, the Triqui community, were then able to participate in the Greenfield City Council meetings and organize to protect ourselves from being persecuted.

I still feel insecure being in my own home. People have violated my rights by barging into my home the way these authorities did. They made me feel like a criminal, and I am not. I, like many of us, came to this country to better my economic situation.

After what happened, I became the responsible head of household, and need to take care of all our financial needs. I have to take care of my kids, feed all of us now, and keep a roof over our heads. With many of the men gone, and the remaining ones only earning minimum wage, we are all having a very hard time. With the beginning of the harvest season starting slow, it is really hard to make the stretch now.

We worry about our right to health care because of the fear of being deported. There are a lot of questions; here, unlike Mexico, they won't just treat us. We need either money or insurance to be attended. If there is somewhere we can go, it is often far away and transportation is a problem. So it is hard.

And so, we work for whatever people are willing to pay us. We need to survive. We are hired for a job, and we will do it. Our basic economic human rights have been violated many times. I expected more when I came to the United States.

Andrew Baker, recent high school graduate, client at BOSS Youth House

I am an 18 year old senior at Berkeley High School. My grades have come from F's to A's. I enjoy sports and hobbies of many kinds including cross-country running.

First there were family problems in my home, including divorce and alcoholism which my father was caught up in. I had the choice of going to juvie (juvenile detention) or to the Bill Wilson housing program for two months. I completed my time there and had no choice but to live at the BOSS Youth Housing Program. I lived with a family member for a couple of weeks until BOSS could arrange for me to come in. It allowed me a stable enough situation to bring my grades up enough to graduate from BHS. There were plenty of obstacles for me.

If housing didn't exist for me when I had to leave, I would most likely have had to stay on the streets. Living in a housing program was very much needed in my case and I learned a lot of valuable things.

I come from a family that isn't always able to provide adequate food. Too much of being in that situation would have had a bad effect on my future. BOSS Youth House helped me get all of the technical aspects of my medical care like getting my prescriptions in Berkeley.

Christina Gomez, formerly homeless mother of three, staff at Homeless Prenatal

My name is Christina Gomez. I am a twenty-four year old mother of three children ages five, three, and one. I have lived in San Francisco since I was four and currently work as a client advocate and organizer with the Homeless Prenatal Program (HPP).

At the beginning of 2000, I became homeless when my landlord decided to make our four unit building into a single family home. We were forced to move out. It's people like that, that make it impossible for people like me to live and raise a family.

I came to the Homeless Prenatal Program after being frustrated with service provided by Connecting Point, a service organization. I originally went up to Connecting Point to see if they could refer me to a child care agency so that my son could go to preschool. I had been up there for the same thing several times and no one helped me. Finally, I decided it might be easier to go to HPP.

I was impressed that the minute I had met with the case manager she was asking me "Do you need food today?" and "Do you want to have someone watch the kids while we talk?" I felt a rush of relief. These people understand that being homeless is a full time job and that this is not easy for me.

Nothing drastic happened that day with Carla, my case manager, at HPP. I didn't find a townhouse with a patio to live in, I wasn't offered a job that paid \$60,000 a year. But I did get to talk to her. I was able to explain to her why I was homeless. I was glad that someone was not telling me why I was homeless. She asked me about my goals, what I wanted to do once I got a job. For the first time in about three months I was able to think about myself without thinking about my circumstances.

I realized that day that I was not a bad parent and most importantly I realized while talking to her that this was not my fault. I did get referral for my child care and I was given the peace of mind that things were going to be okay. I have come a long way since then and I am now in the HPP Policy and Advocacy Department.

My fiancée and I make a little less than \$30,000 a year, which is not enough to move into a decent apartment for my family in the city. I have had to look for housing in other cities. Right now my family is staying at a single-room occupancy hotel. I get up before five to get the kids ready, drop them at day care, and then try to make it to work at a decent time. I feel this is a violation of my human rights.

I am a community organizer and client advocate. I do all the work the people at the top don't ever want to do or deal with. I want to continue to do this type of work in San Francisco where I was raised and received so much support when I was down and out. But I feel if this housing crisis does not stop, I will be forced to choose another profession.

Robert from Seton Hall, formerly homeless client at St. Anthony's Foundation in S.F.

My name is Robert. I was homeless in Alameda for some time. There was no place to get food, except one soup kitchen, where I could get once a day, a bowl of soup and a piece of bread. I didn't know about the resources in San Francisco.

For three years, I was homeless and starved quite a bit. I was working and paying child support—most of my check went to child support. I would buy a little food, then I lost my job—that was when I was really hungry.

I relied on human compassion. I stood out there with a sign that read "Please no money, I only ask if you could spare a little food and water." Compassionate people would come by and bring me food, drop off a bottle of water, and maybe lunch meats and bread—things they knew I could keep for a while.

Food stamps to a homeless person are worthless because we have no place to cook it or keep it. They were good to get bread and peanut butter and jelly, but I couldn't get any meat, I had no place to cook it or keep it.

Without food, it brought my attitude down and I gave up. My energy was low. My self-esteem was low. Food is a necessity for life. If you're not eating healthy, if you are not eating period, you are not going to be healthy.

When I came to St. Anthony's Recovery Program, I was shriveled up. I weighed 125 pounds and I thought I was going to die. Getting food has had a major impact on my recovery. It gave me back my self-esteem, my motivation.

Starvation is a one problem we should not have. That problem should already be solved but politics and greed keep that from happening. Politicians say they want to solve it but it doesn't happen.

Rene Castillo, uninsured worker, client of Bay Area Legal Aid

My name is Rene Castillo, and I'm 43 years old. I was diagnosed with severe psoriasis when I was 21. It started slowly, but it progressed until it was all over my body, and it's really resistant to treatment. I have had private medical insurance at times in my life, but when I've lost it. I've had to apply for Medi-Cal. Medi-Cal is the state health insurance for people who are disabled.

I've applied for Medi-Cal twice, and both times I was denied on the first try. I did finally get Medi-Cal, but I had to appeal. The first time, I went to the hearing and all I did was take off my shirt to show the judge, and he said, "You have it." The second time I was represented by Sara Lipowitz at Bay Area Legal Aid, and I just won that appeal.

A turning point in my life was when I started working for the Anacomp Corporation about 10 years ago. That was a great job, but it became stressful and I started drinking. I went into a program to treat my drinking; I had private health insurance at the time, so I had the money to do that, and it was good for me. I got out, and I've been okay since. But I lost my job because I took so much time off for that, and I had to take time off because my psoriasis got bad. After I was better, I tried to get my job back, but Anacomp told me that my job had been downsized. I lost my health insurance, so I wasn't able to get my medications or see the doctor.

I think that it should be a right to have medical insurance. If you're sick, or you have a disease, by law you should be able to get insurance, no questions asked. I wish that someone could find a cure for psoriasis, but until they do, I need to see the doctor and get the medications and treatments I need. I've also been really disappointed in how the system has been working, because they denied me the Medi-Cal without even looking at my medical records. That's a real waste of time and money.

Medi-Cal is supposed to help people, not give people a bad time. In my case, Medi-Cal was supposed to get my medical records to help them make their decision, but they didn't. This is not acceptable. I hope you agree and that you are also interested in working to change this situation.

Sandra Estrada, staff at Community Bridges Beacon, mother of three children

My name is Sandra Estrada and I'm a 36 year old Mexican-American single mom with three children: Giovanni 15 years old, Noel 11 years old, and Ariana 10 years old. I work at the Community Bridges Beacon Center with families. I enjoy my work because it's very rewarding.

I'm a very active member in my community and sit on many committees. I want to improve and give my input of ideas, which I believe will be beneficial for the families, children, and neighbors. I see and hear their stories and lives and I bring it to the table. I gather and share resources and empower them with information so they can make decisions and take actions accordingly.

I got involved with Community Bridges Beacon (CBB) because I was excited about a community center coming to our neighborhood. Originally I was expecting only to make use of their services and programs for myself and my children—like classes on job search, resume writing, and interview techniques. In 1996 when they were looking for safety and support staff I applied, interviewed, and got hired. Later I applied and was chosen for a different position as family facilitator.

My children have attended many wonderful programs here at CBB. Gio was a student health promoter on wellness and violence prevention. He made classroom presentations against violence and presentations to parents, too. He worked on a comic book to educate about alcoholism, and he entered many poster contests—in one he took fourth place.

He was also in Kid Power. They met every Friday and discussed what mattered to them and how they could make a difference through community work. He attends St. John's summer urban institute—a summer program that gives you school credit, plus leadership skills, fun, and music.

Our school buildings are falling apart. Our children, our future, deal everyday with asbestos, lead paint chipping, no soap and paper towels in bathrooms, broken windows and faucets, cracks in the stairs, no handrails, not handicap accessible in front, not enough security, gangs, teachers without credentials, administrators who are not supportive and not collaborative, not enough textbooks for students to bring home to study, very large class sizes, and not enough nutritious food.

There is a definite need for textbooks that are truthful. The school needs books by authors from the countries of origin of the students and about issues that people of color want to learn from and about.

Every person should have equal access to four years of education beyond high school—this should be the minimum—and not just a trade school or community college. Also, following high school everyone should have equal access to affordable and quality childcare, after school programs, and affordable housing.

Policy Papers

Hunger in America

Anuradha Mittal, co-director, Food First/Institute for Food & Development Policy

Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself (herself) and of his (her) family, including the right to food.

Unfortunately, a look at the United States reveals a wide gap between the goal of universal access to adequate nutrition and the reality of hunger that plagues millions in this country alone. According to the USDA estimates, 10.5 million American households (one in ten) do not have adequate access to food. Thirty-six million people live in these households, including 14 million children under age 18—the nation's most vulnerable. A survey of 25 cities conducted in December 2000 by the U.S. Conference of Mayors showed an increase of 17 percent in requests for emergency food assistance, the highest since 1992. In California, 11.4 percent of households are experiencing hunger.

Hunger in the United States is increasing for a variety of reasons but poverty, low-paying jobs, high housing costs, unemployment, food stamp cuts, and welfare reform are the root causes. Today over 40 million Americans live in poverty. Despite their best efforts, increasing numbers of working families are trapped in poverty. Working full time, year round for the minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour earns only 83 percent of the poverty line income for a family of three. Extreme poverty is growing fastest among children. The U.S. already has the highest child poverty rate among the industrialized countries with one in five living in poverty. In 60 percent of households with children experiencing hunger, at least one member is employed. Thirty-nine percent of adults requesting food are employed.

Rising costs of living increase hunger as smaller portions of household income are left to purchase food. Instead of raising food stamp allocations to provide for these growing needs, the federal government instead cut billions from the program's budget in the 1996 welfare reform law.

Over \$27 billion in food stamp money has been slashed over a six year period, and billions more cut from the Child and Adult Care Food Program and the Summer Food Service Program. Legal immigrants were excluded from food stamp benefits, a change that will affect over 900,000 people—150,000 of them children. An additional 600,000 children live in households where adults lost their benefits, reducing the total amount of food for the household. The remaining seven million families receiving food stamps lost an average of \$435 each in benefits in the first full year of cuts. The new food stamp law also limits the cost of living adjustments in the budget, which will allow inflation to erode benefits. Finally, it limits the allowable reduction for high shelter costs, which will make the choice between food and shelter even more difficult.

President George W. Bush, commenting on his administration's faith-based anti-poverty initiatives in a commencement speech at the University of Notre Dame, recently said "The war on poverty established a federal commitment to the poor. The welfare reform legislation of 1996 made that commitment more effective. For the task ahead, we must move to the third stage of combating poverty in America. Our society must enlist, equip, and empower idealistic Americans in the works of compassion that only they can provide."

The reality is that the cutbacks in federal food programs have created a tremendous pressure for private food assistance programs to fill the void. Second Harvest, the country's largest chain of food banks, reported in 1998 that it fed almost 26 million people—nearly 10 percent of America's population. Even so, it had to turn away an estimated 2.3 million people because of lack of food. The gap left by the federal food stamp program each year is four times the amount that America's Second Harvest could provide in a "best case" scenario.

Hunger has severe health consequences. Long term malnutrition in adults is linked to cancer, diabetes, and heart disease. In addition, food insecurity has been linked to various psychological and social problems, including anxiety, depression, crime, family disintegration, and violence. Allowing many of our children to go hungry has disastrous implications for our nation's future. Acute and prolonged hunger in children increases the chances of infant mortality, reduced physical growth, and permanently impaired brain development. Significantly, hunger is at the root of the majority of the health problems discovered by the Children's Health and Disability Prevention Program screening low-income youth.

In light of the gap that remains between the goal of universal human rights and the reality for millions in this country, it is vital that significant steps be taken to ensure food as a human right in America.

Article 11 of the International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights reaffirms the right to food laid out in the UDHR, going on to say, "The State Parties to the present Covenant, recognizing the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger, shall take measures which are needed: [among other things] to improve... distribution of food... to ensure an equitable distribution of... supplies in relation to need."

Such a statement is particularly poignant in the U.S., where the knowledge and resources are more than sufficient to provide everyone in this country with an adequate diet. The fact that millions remain hungry amidst this great wealth is simply wrong and must stop. The time has come to move the sentiments of the UDHR from words on a page into concrete action. The time to has come to make the right to food a reality for everyone in this country.

The Rights of Workers

Hina B. Shah, former staff attorney at the Asian Law Caucus, San Francisco and board president of Sweatshop Watch.

Over the last two decades, workers have faced a drastically different workplace economy. Corporations have wielded tremendous power and have been successful in weakening labor protections, trade barriers, and environmental safeguards. While corporations have reaped tremendous profits by the free flow of capital, workers have seen their basic rights to decent wages, health benefits, and protection from discrimination steadily erode.

Nonstandard Work

At the core of this new global economy is the proliferation of nonstandard work. Permanent, long-term employment with good wages and benefits is drastically being cut to be replaced by nonstandard work or contingent work. The terms “nonstandard” and “contingent” refer to various forms of employment including temporary, contract, freelance, and part-time. Corporations justify the replacement of permanent jobs with contingent work to increase flexibility, reduce labor costs, and increase profits in the face of global competition.

As of 1999, 5.6 million U.S. workers hold contingent jobs. These workers toil without job security, without benefits including health and often for low-pay. More than half of all contingent workers are women. Many are immigrant workers. Majority of them would prefer permanent employment.

Temporary employment agencies have multiplied to service the growing need for contingent workers. In California, since 1984, employment in temporary employment agencies grew by 150 percent. Compared to the rest of the nation, contingent employment has skyrocketed in Silicon Valley. In janitorial, clerical, and electronic assembly industries, employers are exclusively relying on contingent workers, through subcontractors or temporary employment agencies.

The human costs of a flexible workforce are staggering. Raj, a temporary worker in Silicon Valley, said: “I was paid \$8.00 an hour and had no benefits. Manpower said they offered a benefits program, but the premiums were way too high given the hourly wage. With the cost of housing being so high, I didn’t know anybody at work who could afford to pay for those benefits. There were around 900 people doing assembly work like me at the plant . . . We were all Manpower temporary workers hired to make Hewlett Packard printers.”

Welfare to Work

In 1996, the United States passed a devastating welfare reform bill, cutting off billions of dollars in benefits to poor people. In addition, the federal government established a five-year lifetime limit for welfare recipients to be implemented by the states. Welfare recipient must find work within two years (or shorter caps depending on the state) or face benefit termination. While welfare rolls have steadily declined, former welfare recipients continue to live in poverty.

Sixty-one to eighty-seven percent of former welfare recipients have found jobs in the new economy. However, majority of these jobs are contingent or nonstandard employment, with low wages and no benefit. Because of federal and state welfare limits, welfare recipients do not receive long-term vocational or educational training. Most receive short-term training for entry-level jobs, mostly in the service sector. Many welfare recipients are sent to temporary help agencies to find work. A welfare recipient in California said “You actually [now] have to go to work and make less than you were making when you were on welfare, which isn’t anything to be happy about.” Another welfare recipient said “I don’t want to work temp. I want a permanent job where I’m stable.” Because the majority of jobs found by welfare recipients are contingent, between 19 and 30 percent of former recipients return to welfare.

Foreign Guestworker Programs

The United States has relied on the steady flow of immigrants to work in the lowest-paid, least desirable jobs. The high-end job market has also relied on immigrant labor to work in technical and scientific jobs. The demand for foreign workers is the greatest in the agricultural and technology industries.

Guestworker programs have been a cornerstone of U.S. labor supply since World War II. The first guestworker program, the Bracero program, granted temporary visas to four to five million Mexican citizens for seasonal agriculture work in the U.S. A Department of Labor officer in charge of the program called the Bracero Program “legalized slavery.” In 1950s, Congress passed the current agricultural guest-worker program, the H-2A program, which granted temporary visas to agricultural workers. The program, however, has never been widely used. Because of administrative and bureaucratic costs with the H-2A program, the industry relies on undocumented workers.

Similarly, in the high-technology field, employers have relied on H-1B temporary visas to meet the technical labor shortage in the U.S. Recently, employers, mostly in Silicon Valley, have convinced Congress that the cap on H1-B needed to increase to 600,000 for the next three years. Most of the H-1B visa foreign workers come from India and China. A survey of 400 U.S. technology firms found that they generally paid one-third to one-half less to foreign workers than their U.S. counterparts. The Department of Labor has recovered over a \$1 million dollars for over 300 technology workers. While the new law has created some flexibility for H1-B workers to change employers, abuses will continue without the option for permanent residency.

Both the H2A and H1-B programs sanction temporary contingent labor. Most agricultural workers do not make the minimum wage and seldom are paid overtime and work in hazardous conditions. The work is seasonal, without benefits and labor-intensive. The H-1B workers also face wage abuses, making considerably less than their U.S. counterparts. Finally, the H-1B program has intensified criticism for displacement of U.S. technical workers as well increasing the digital divide.

What Needs to be Done

- Increase the state and federal minimum wage and adopt living wage ordinances
- Expand eligibility for unemployment insurance benefits for contingent workers
- Develop welfare to work training and educational programs that target higher-wage and higher skill jobs
- Expand family-based immigration visas

Conclusion

International declarations and treaties including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, recognize workers rights to just and favorable conditions of work, including the right to equal pay for equal work, and the right to form trade unions. It is time for recognition and implementation of these international treaties by the United States.

Health Care: A Right not a Privilege

Frances Payne, Neighbor-to-Neighbor—San Francisco

Health care in the U.S. is courting disaster. Even the mainstream news media have reported almost every aspect of it from the lack of access to medical coverage to the dangerously low quality of medical attention provided.

It is important to know that this is a corporate-made crisis, the result of the runaway greed of the health care “industry” which has succeeded in totally shifting the focus in the practice of medicine. No longer is health care seen as a right and a human endeavor to alleviate suffering and promote well being, but it is now a commodity or, in many cases, even a luxury, to be bought and sold to the highest bidder for the highest returns. The World Bank has recently pronounced that “health is a private matter and health care a private good.” In that spirit, pharmaceutical and medical supply companies, HMOs and insurance corporations have had free rein over health care during the past two decades and have put us all at risk.

The USA has about four percent of the world’s population, yet accounts for nearly half of all the money spent on health care worldwide. In spite of the cost, the USA has steadily declined in the quality of care provided and has dropped to 25th among the world’s nations in rates of infant mortality and life expectancy, behind, even some third world countries.

National statistics show 47 million Americans are without health insurance, 85 percent of them, the working poor and some even employed by the biggest and wealthiest corporations who fail to cover some 25 percent of their workers. In 2000 Medicare HMOs walked away from nearly a million senior citizens because the plans didn’t yield a profit. Add to that another 700,000 dropped in the same way in 1998 and 1999 and the downward spiral of health care becomes even more alarming.

Public health systems everywhere feel the fallout from this in an especially cruel way, as they are overwhelmed with very many very sick people. The uninsured pour into emergency rooms and are dumped on their doorsteps by private hospitals unwilling to bear a fair load. Slash and burn budgetary policy has created an insurmountable task that has no relief in sight with the Bush Administration.

In San Francisco, this translates to 25 percent of the population enrolled in publicly funded plans (Medi-Cal and Medicare) and another 17 percent with no coverage at all, a pattern reflected throughout the State of California. This has devastating results. For example, 50 percent of those seeking mental health treatment in San Francisco last year did not receive it. Overall, the system suffers from inadequate programs for substance abuse, drug rehabilitation, mental health, an insufficient number of hospital beds, understaffing at all levels, and the risky practice of employing unqualified personnel.

The private sector has also experienced the same decline, with complaints of understaffing and the denial of treatment in order to boost profits. Meanwhile their CEOs reap huge salaries and their shareholders ride the crest.

Health care is an area where the gap between rich and poor is tragically evident. Some research even shows that this gap is the decisive factor in determining life span and that across the board, egalitarian societies are healthier. (Since France switched to a publicly financed health care system, it has jumped to number one in its quality of care.) Other studies have shown that the causes of poor health are economic. The wealthy have access to health care services and use more frequently. Lower income groups have higher mortality rates and live in substandard housing and are exposed to contamination contributing to serious illness.

What Needs to Be Done

- Support the universal health care study process called for by SB480 in California.
- Support and/or organize local coalitions to keep “nipping at the heels” of local boards of health and others in decision-making positions.
- Nationally, there is the need to stop the privatization of medical. Medical Savings Accounts are not the answer. For other actions taking place throughout the states, see www.uhcan.org.

Education is a Right: A Plan to Improve California’s Public Schools

John Avalos, Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth

Access to high quality education should be accessible to all, not just the wealthy. The United States has taken a turn for the worst in providing this basic human right. After years of neglect, it’s going to take a sea change to get us on the right track. California’s troubles are representative of the national situation that is crying out for action.

Since the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, California's public school system has been on a downward spiral. Prop 13 dramatically undercut the state's resources and made it impossible to offer students the rich educational experience they enjoyed before 1978. However, in 2001 the system's problems are no longer simply financial matters. As officials increasingly tinker with market-oriented education policy, California's education problems have become entrenched philosophical and political problems as well.

A case in point is how testing has become an industry. Test scores have become the carrot and the yardstick to measure academic success and accountability. Across California, school districts are using the Stanford 9 Test and other examinations to assess teaching methods and resource allocation.

Increasingly educators are teaching to these tests, preparing students with test-taking strategies rather than the critical thinking skills necessary for today's citizenry. As a profession teaching is losing the creative edge it gained in the 1960s and 1970s. The door is being shut on innovative, engaging reading and math methodologies in favor of rote strategies that are geared more toward developing compliant students.

The latest development is Governor Davis' policy of offering financial rewards to schools with high test scores. There is no better way to exacerbate the gross inequities in California's school system. Offering rigorous testing and financial incentives will not alter the fact that the state is failing a vast majority of its students, especially students of color. The high school drop out rate among students of color is staggering and many youth of color are heading for penitentiary before the university. In Alameda and San Francisco counties, there is currently more money to build juvenile halls than schools.

Education is becoming an entrepreneurial venture. Elected officials are handing over public dollars to investors interested in a product serving their bottom line, not young people's minds. Earlier this year, Governor Davis rewarded campaign contributor Don Fisher, founder of the Gap and a main stockholder of the for-profit education enterprise Edison Inc., with a seat on California's powerful Board of Education. Six of the Board's eleven members, a majority, have backgrounds in business but no experience in running a school.

In recent years, California has enjoyed a large surplus in the state budget. However students have suffered the lack of political will to provide additional resources to prevent the slide of California's aging education infrastructure. Last year, the American Civil Liberties Union sued the state of California for allowing certain schools to function in a dilapidated state while other schools enjoy state of the art facilities and access to materials.

What Needs to be Done

- Ensure a permanent and steady infusion of capital into the public school system. In California, amending the corporate tax provisions of Prop 13 and instituting progressive tax measures would be steps in the right direction.

- Stem the current re-segregation trend in public schools through measures focusing on funding equity. Clearly our nation does not offer the same high standard of education for all students—divisions are drawn along racial and economic lines. Rural and urban school districts with diverse ethnic populations and limited resources are under siege.
- Institute free high quality pre-K school for all children
- Institute widespread creation of small middle and high schools to offer greater personal attention to each student. Require small classes—less than 20 per classroom for all grade levels.
- Institute authentic assessment and end high stakes testing, such as the Stanford 9 Test in California.
- Initiate a five-year strategic plan to hire more teachers of color for all levels of the education system. End unnecessary and culturally biased teacher examinations that offer no qualified measurement of a teacher's readiness for the classroom.
- Develop and support implementation of curricula that accurately and faithfully teach the truth about the history, culture, and contributions of people of color living in the United States.

Living Wage Policy Statement

Karl Kramer, Director—San Francisco Living Wage Coalition

The San Francisco Living Wage Coalition is a broad-based coalition of low-wage workers and their allies in labor unions, community organizations, social justice groups and the faith-based community. We believe that anyone who works full time should earn enough to support their family without having to rely on the taxpayers or charity to make it through the month.

We campaigned to get a city law passed that conditions City service contracts and airport leases on the employer providing their workers at least \$9 an hour, going up to \$10 by next year, and 12 paid days off a year. The living wage law only applies to those businesses and organizations that choose to do business with the City. The City should not subsidize employers who pay poverty wages.

Thousands of people work full-time in San Francisco, yet still live in poverty. This city law will help 21,000 of those low-wage workers. When jobs do not pay a self-sufficient wage, the taxpayers make up the difference. Our tax dollars pay for the services the working poor use to survive—food stamps, medical care at SF General, housing subsidies, and others. Each low-wage job costs the taxpayers approximately \$11,000 a year in health care, food stamps, and other entitlements workers need to make ends meet. When businesses with city contracts pay poverty wages, the taxpayers end up paying twice—first to the business through the contract, and then secondly to the workers for supports they need to survive.

A study by the San Francisco Department of Health estimated that the City requiring contractors to pay a living wage would prevent 229 deaths per year among those from 16 to 64 years old, and reduce the risk of premature death by one-third. Also according to the same Department of

Health study, a living wage for full-time working parents would more than double their children's likelihood of graduating from high school.

Requiring a living wage levels the playing field so businesses compete on the quality of services, not on how little they are willing to pay their workers. This reduces unscrupulous competition by contractors slashing labor costs and promotes a healthier business climate. Requiring a living wage means better quality services for the City by reducing job turnover, increasing workforce stability, experience, and productivity. Requiring a living wage is beneficial for neighborhood businesses because workers take home more money to spend in their own neighborhoods. This helps San Francisco's economy. Anyone who works in San Francisco should be able to afford to live in San Francisco. A living wage brings stability to our communities and local economy.

The San Francisco Bay Area has one of the highest costs of living in the nation. According to a study by the Californians for Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Project and Wider Opportunities for Women, released in November 2000, the self-sufficiency standard for San Francisco County is \$20.92 an hour for an adult with one child. Our living wage law is just a modest step towards helping families move to self-sufficiency. The Living Wage Coalition is continuing to campaign for a higher wage rate.

Presently, the Living Wage Coalition is campaigning for a city law to require employers with city service contracts or city leases to pay \$1.50 an hour for each worker into a group health plan, or pay \$1.50 an hour to a city-administered health insurance pool, or add a \$1.50 an hour to employee's wages so that they can get individual plans. Around 44 percent of low-wage workers in San Francisco are without health insurance. The lack of preventative care results in an increased health risk to low-wage workers and an increased burden on the county health care system.

The Living Wage Coalition is campaigning for a transition program for mothers receiving the state CalWORKs grant that would pay \$8 an hour for 32 hours a week of work in non-public sector, community service jobs in which the job descriptions would be matched to minimum requirements for entry-level city jobs. One of the greatest barriers in the welfare to work transition is the lack of jobs that pay self-sufficiency wages. One of the major causes of former welfare recipients returning to welfare is the inability to support themselves and their children in low-wage jobs. While state law allows the use of the CalWORKs grant to be paid as wages for on-the-job-training in community service jobs for mothers past their 24-month mark, state law does not allow for a county to supplement those wages. This keeps these women stuck at \$6.26 an hour. We need the state to allow counties to have the flexibility to use general fund money for innovative transition programs.

We are also campaigning to have participants in the county-funded workfare program included in these community service jobs. The integrity of the Living Wage law can be undermined if workfare workers are excluded. People working to qualify for their monthly grants of around \$375 are already doing work that used to be done by city workers paid wages that could support a family. Historically in San Francisco, workfare workers have been denied the opportunity to qualify for available city jobs—even those jobs analogous to the work that they do such as doing

the laundry at General Hospital, cleaning public buses or sweeping streets. Workfare should not be a loophole to avoid paying a living wage.

On a national level, our local coalition is joining with living wage coalitions from more than 50 cities in supporting Federal Living Wage Responsibility Act, H.R. 4353, introduced by Congressman Luis Gutierrez, which would require any for-profit firms holding a federal contract worth at least \$10,000 to pay all employees working on that contract at least \$8.20 an hour. A study by the Economic Policy Institute showed that at least 162,000 workers, 11 percent of federal contract workers, may be currently earning less than \$8.20 an hour performing work for the government through federal contracts. This is below the federal poverty level for a family of four. This includes welfare service aides, file clerks, accounting clerks, teachers' aides, janitors, packers, bus drivers, child-care attendants, prison guards, court security clerks, food-service workers, laundry workers, parking lot attendants, and receptionists.

We are also supporting the Universal Living Wage campaign. In this campaign, through an interactive web site, www.UniversalLivingWage.org, people can sign a petition that says anyone working a forty hour week should be able to afford housing. This is to build a national grassroots movement for federal legislation that would tie the minimum wage to a formula that would allow people to afford the cost of housing in different parts of the country—at least an efficiency apartment. The formula is based on people spending no more than 30 percent of their income on housing and utilizes the HUD Fair Market Rents that are adjusted annually. This can end homelessness for an estimated one-third of homeless people in the United States.

Paying a living wage is the right thing to do morally and economically. No job should pay less than it costs to survive. If people are going to play by the rules and work hard for a living, they should earn enough to make ends meet. It's a matter of basic fairness.

Participating Organizations

Alameda County Community Food Bank
 American Friends Service Committee (San Francisco)
 AMO Organics
 Asian Law Caucus
 Bay Area Legal Aid
 Building Opportunities for Self Sufficiency (BOSS)
 Center for Community Advocacy
 Center for Economic and Policy Research
 Center for Economic and Social Rights
 Citizenship Project
 Coalition for Ethical Welfare Reform
 Coalition on Homelessness
 Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth
 Community Action Board of Santa Cruz
 Community Bridges Beacon

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Institute for Food and Development Policy

Policy Brief

Day Labor Program
 Ella Baker Center for Human Rights
 Emergency Coalition to Save Public Health
 Food Bank for Monterey County
 Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy
 Global Exchange
 Homeless Prenatal Program
 Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE) Local 2
 Interfaith Coalition on Immigrant Rights
 International Forum on Globalization
 JustAct—Youth Action for Global Justice
 Kensington Welfare Rights Union
Lideres Campesinas
 Literacy for Environmental Justice
 Living Wage Coalition—San Francisco
 National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
 Neighbor-to-Neighbor—San Francisco
 People Organized to Win Employment Rights (POWER)
 People's Budget Collaborative
 Pesticide Action Network
 Saint Anthony's Foundation
 Saint Mary's Center
 Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 250
 Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 535
 South Bay Labor Council
 Teachers for Social Justice
 Teamsters Local 890
 United Farm Workers
 Women's Economic Agenda Project
 Women's Institute for Leadership Development for Human Rights
 Youth Force Coalition

National Endorsers

Congressional Endorsers

Congressional Progressive Caucus (fifty-seven members)

Caucus Members that participated in Congressional Hearings and/or Bus Tours

Xavier Becerra, California
 John Conyers, Michigan
 Peter A. DeFazio, Oregon
 Bob Filner, California

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Earl Hilliard, Alabama
 Barabara Lee, California
 Cynthia Ann McKinney, Georgia
 George Miller, California
 Nancy Pelosi, California
 Esteban Edward Torres, California
 Melvin Watt, North Carolina
 Senator Paul Wellstone, Minnesota

Organizations Endorsing the Campaign

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 50 Years is Enough: U.S. Network for Global Economic Justice | Washington, DC |
| Abya Yala Fund For Indigenous Self-Development | Oakland, CA |
| Agricultural Missions | New York, NY |
| Alabama ARISE | Huntsville, AL |
| Alameda County Community Food Bank | Oakland, CA |
| Americans for Indian Opportunity | Bernalillio, NM |
| Archdiocese of San Francisco | San Francisco, CA |
| Asian American Federation of California | Newark, CA |
| Asian Immigrant Women Advocates | Oakland, CA |
| Bay Area Homelessness Program | San Francisco, CA |
| Bread for the World | Silversprings, MD |
| Building Opportunities for Self Sufficiency | Oakland, CA |
| California Association of Food Banks | Sacramento, CA |
| California Council of Churches | Sacramento, CA |
| California Fair Trade Campaign | San Francisco, CA |
| California Food Policy Advocates | Oakland, CA |
| California Indians for Cultural and Environmental Protection | San Francisco, CA |
| Californians for Justice | Oakland, CA |
| Campaign for Labor Rights | Eugene, OR |
| Campaign to Abolish Poverty | San Francisco, CA |
| Capitol Hill Group Ministries | Washington, DC |
| Center for Campus Organizing | Cambridge, MA |
| Center for Community Change | Washington, DC |
| Center for Ethics and Economic Policy | Oakland, CA |
| Center for Human Rights Education | Atlanta, GA |
| Center for Study of Responsive Law | Washington, DC |
| Center for Third World Organizing | Oakland, CA |
| Center for Women's Global Leadership | New Brunswick, NJ |
| Center of Concern | Washington, DC |
| <i>Centro Legal De La Raza</i> | Oakland, CA |
| Chiapas Support Committee | Oakland, CA |
| Church World Service and Witness | New York, NY |
| CISCAP | Eugene, OR |
| Citizens for Public Accountability | Eugene, OR |

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|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Coalition for Ethical Welfare Reform | San Francisco, CA |
| Coalition on Homelessness | San Francisco, CA |
| Coalition on Human Needs | Washington, DC |
| Colombian Justice and Peace Office | Washington, DC |
| Committees of Correspondence | Oakland, CA |
| Common Counsel | Oakland, CA |
| Communities for Better Environment | San Francisco, CA |
| Community Food Security Coalition | Los Angeles, CA |
| Congressional Hunger Center | Washington, DC |
| Corumbiara Project | Seattle, WA |
| Council on International and Public Affairs | New York, NY |
| Cultural Conservancy | San Francisco, CA |
| Development GAP | Washington, DC |
| Earth Island Journal | San Francisco, CA |
| Ecology Center | Oakland, CA |
| Economic Justice Now | Oakland, CA |
| Economic Policy Institute | Washington, DC |
| Edmonds Institute | Edmonds, WA |
| Emergency Service Network | Oakland, CA |
| Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting | New York, NY |
| Farm Labor Organizing Committee | Toledo, OH |
| Food for Lane County | Eugene, OR |
| Food Not Bombs | San Francisco, CA |
| General Board on Global Ministries | Washington, DC |
| Georgia Citizens Coalition on Hunger | Atlanta, GA |
| Global Exchange | San Francisco, CA |
| Grass Roots Policy Project | Washington, DC |
| Gray Panthers | Washington, DC |
| Greater Texas Workers Committee | El Paso, TX |
| Heartland Alliance | Chicago, IL |
| <i>Homies Unidos</i> | Miami, FL |
| Howard County Friends of Central America and the Caribbean | Colombia, MD |
| Human Rights Access | Washington, DC |
| Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy | Minneapolis, MN |
| Institute for Policy Studies- Global Economy Program | Washington, DC |
| Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization | New York, NY |
| Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility | New York, NY |
| Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights (ICIR) | San Francisco, CA |
| Interhemispheric Resource Center | Albuquerque, NM |
| International Forum on Globalization | San Francisco, CA |
| Just Act | San Francisco, CA |
| Kensington Welfare Rights Union | Philadelphia, PA |
| <i>La Mujer Obrero</i> | El Paso, TX |
| League of Revolutionaries for a New America | Chicago, IL |
| MAIZ | Oakland, CA |

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| Media Beat | Oakland, CA |
| Meiklejohn Civil Liberties | Berkeley, CA |
| Migrant Farmworker Justice Project | Belle Glade, FL |
| Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights | Minneapolis, MN |
| Mission of the Atonement Church | Beaverton, OR |
| Missouri Rural Crisis Center | Colombia, MO |
| Montana Human Rights Network | Helena, MT |
| National Coalition for the Homeless | Washington, DC |
| National Commission for Democracy in Mexico | El Paso, TX |
| National Farmers Union | Washington, DC |
| National Jobs for All Coalition | New York, NY |
| National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty | Washington, DC |
| National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty | Washington, DC |
| National Lawyers Guild | San Francisco, CA |
| National Low Income Housing Coalition | Washington, DC |
| National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights | Oakland, CA |
| National People's Campaign | San Francisco, CA |
| National Radio Project | Oakland, CA |
| Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development | Berkeley, CA |
| Network: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby | Washington, DC |
| New York City Coalition Against Hunger | New York, NY |
| Nicaragua Network | Washington, DC |
| Northern California Coalition for Immigrant Rights | San Francisco, CA |
| Nuclear Age Peace Foundation | Santa Barbara, CA |
| OCCUR | Oakland, CA |
| Order of Friars Minor | Minneapolis, MN |
| Peninsula Peace and Justice Center | Palo Alto, CA |
| People for Bread, Work, and Justice | Oakland, CA |
| People Opposing Welfare Rollbacks | San Jose, CA |
| People's Decade of Human Rights Education | New York, NY |
| Pesticide Action Network | San Francisco, CA |
| PODER | Austin, TX |
| Poor People's Embassy | New York, NY |
| Preamble Collaborative | Washington, DC |
| Program on Corporations, Law and Democracy | Princeton, MA |
| Project South: Institute for Elimination of Poverty and Genocide | Atlanta, GA |
| Project Underground | Berkeley, CA |
| Public Citizen | Washington, DC |
| Pure Food Campaign | Little Marais, MN |
| San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners (SLUG) | San Francisco, CA |
| Santa Barbara Province of Franciscan Friars | Portland, OR |
| Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 535 | Oakland, CA |
| Senior Gleaners, INC. | North Highlands, CA |
| Share Our Strength | Washington, DC |
| South and Meso American Indian Rights Center | Oakland, CA |

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| South West Organizing Project | Albuquerque, NM |
| St. Anthony Foundation | San Francisco, CA |
| Task Force on Children's Nutrition Rights | Honolulu, Hawaii |
| Tides Foundation | San Francisco, CA |
| United Food and Commercial Workers Union | Hayward, CA |
| United for a Fair Economy | Boston, MA |
| United Methodist Global Ministries | Washington, DC |
| University of Minnesota Human Rights Center | Minneapolis, MN |
| Urban Habitat Program | San Francisco, CA |
| Urban Justice Center | New York, NY |
| Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless | Washington, DC |
| Washington Toxics Coalition | Seattle, WA |
| Witness For Peace (Mid-Atlantic Region) | Lewes, DE |
| Women of Color Resource Center | Berkeley, CA |
| Women's Environment and Development Organization | New York, NY |
| Women's Institute for Leadership and Development | San Francisco, CA |
| Women's International League for Peace and Freedom | Philadelphia, PA |
| World Hunger Year, Workers Organizing Committee | New York, NY |
| World Organization Against Torture | Washington, DC |
| World View | Temple, NH |
| World Views | Oakland, CA |

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