

**Opponent Testimony of Veronica Dahlberg, Executive Director of HOLA Ohio, on House Bill 380,  
to the House Insurance Committee**

Chairman Brinkman, Ranking Member Bocchieri and Members of the House Insurance Committee, thank you for reading this written testimony. My name is Veronica Dahlberg, and I am the executive director of HOLA Ohio, an organization that works to empower the Latino community through civic engagement, leadership training and community organizing.

HOLA Ohio strongly opposes HB 380, which would weaken workplace safety standards for all workers, reward bad faith employers who operate with unsafe and illegal businesses practices, and penalize immigrant workers rather than providing a long-overdo and much-needed solution for Ohio businesses that rely on this valuable workforce. It has been my experience that when injured workers report to workers compensation, it is often the first red flag that exposes labor and human trafficking operations. HB 380 would effectively provide cover for illegal and exploitative businesses.

**Why it's bad for Ohio:**

Ohio's economy is largely driven by agriculture, including nearly 75,000 farms that often rely on undocumented workers. Ohio is second in the nation for egg production, and hog and dairy farms and nursery stock are some examples of industries that depend on undocumented workers. Growers have been pushing Congress for years to fix the immigration issue and salvage their valuable workforce, but have been ignored.

Targeting and penalizing undocumented workers, such as limiting their access to workers comp and potentially life-saving medical care, as HB 380 does, is misguided and not constructive in solving these issues. Ohio's undocumented workforce is an asset, supporting the state's \$100 billion agriculture industry. In addition, undocumented workers contribute over \$83 million yearly in taxes (March 2017, Institute for Taxation Policy). Workers are relied upon by their families, and are often the main breadwinners. An injury that is not properly cared for can incapacitate that worker for life.

Some unscrupulous employers, specifically those who engage in labor and human trafficking, will find protection in HB 380 to continue dangerous workplace environments and will intentionally seek undocumented workers to employ knowing the bill protects them. Common examples include employers who cut corners and knowingly expose workers to harmful chemicals, pesticides, or use of shoddy equipment causing the loss of fingers and toes, burns or other injuries. This puts all workers at risk.

HB 380 prohibits good-faith employers from providing coverage for their employees. The workers comp system is a safety net that not only protects workers, but serves as a reporting system to identify employers with dangerous workplace practices, including those who engage in labor and human trafficking. It protects employers, ensuring that their injured workers can receive medical care and return to the workforce healthy and productive.

House Bill 380 is the product of a multi-million-dollar Washington D.C. lobby group. It is not suitable for Ohio. It does not provide an urgently-needed solution to our broken immigration system. Instead, it penalizes a vital workforce, provides incentives for businesses who engage in illegal practices including labor and human trafficking, and puts all Ohio workers at risk. HOLA Ohio urges this committee to oppose HB 380. Thank you.