

Thursday, October 18, 2018
Coalition of Immokalee Workers and
Washtenaw Solidarity with Farmworkers

Board of Regents,

We are writing to request an appointment with President Schlissel within the next two weeks. We wish to discuss the public report from the President's Advisory Committee on Labor Standards and Human Rights, published in April 2017.

The report, titled, "Responsible Procurement Project: Review of Findings for Food and Electronics," evaluates and recommends ethical purchasing options available to the University of Michigan. The University has a long history of demonstrating a commitment to ethical purchasing practices, specifically with licensed products such as apparel. The President's Advisory Committee on Human Rights and Labor Standards was created in 2000, and works with the Worker Rights Consortium and the Fair Labor Association in order to monitor labor conditions in the University's supply chain. According to Human Rights Watch, leadership from universities, including the University of Michigan, was one of the main driving forces for greater transparency in garment factories around the world. The support of universities across the U.S. allowed third party monitoring organizations, like the Worker Rights Consortium, to continue to identify and resolve labor violations within global textile supply chains.

Human rights abuses within the world's agricultural industry are widespread and well-documented. Shamefully, slave labor and human trafficking continue to persist within North America. In Ohio in 2014, 2 teenagers were held against their will, with their wages being turned over to those who trafficked them. The same year, the *Los Angeles Times* investigated Mexican vegetable farms and found 100,000 child laborers, slavery, and wage theft.

The Responsible Procurement Project states, "Most of UM's top food suppliers have a Code of Conduct, but most do not monitor, enforce, or keep record of compliance with it." Building on this analysis, the report describes how the University can commit to verifiable, enforceable purchasing programs that have been proven to not only uncover, but prevent, human rights abuses such as human trafficking and sexual violence. In its final recommendations, the report goes on to identify the Coalition of Immokalee Workers' Fair Food Program as "the most comprehensive worker-driven social responsibility program in the U.S."

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers is an internationally-recognized farmworker-led human rights organization that created the Fair Food Program. Through a powerful alliance with consumers across the country, the CIW has been able to secure agreements with 14 multibillion-dollar corporations and Florida-based tomato growers to virtually eliminate exploitation and abuse for tens of thousands of farmworkers - and which still persist beyond the protections of the Program in other agricultural industries and regions. The Fair Food Program works by utilizing five tools: worker education, workplace-specific codes of conduct, comprehensive audits by a third-party monitoring organization, retaliation free complaint mechanisms, and market consequences for any suppliers that violate the code of conduct.

The Responsible Procurement Project urges the the University of Michigan to take the following steps in order to ensure the University is moving forward in its stated goal of "improving labor standards" in its supply chain:

1. President Schlissel publicly makes a commitment to address human rights abuse in food purchases, building on the successes in the licensed goods;
2. Update the University Code of Conduct to require full transparency to the public of the institution's supply chain;
3. Become a signatory of the Fair Food Program, which has been identified as the most comprehensive worker-driven social responsibility program in the U.S.

We look forward to your response regarding a meeting.

Thank you,

Nely Rodriguez, Senior Staff member of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers.

and

Kimberly Daley, on behalf of Washtenaw Solidarity with Farmworkers.

Krdaley@umich.edu

216 407 9027