



# Labor Immigration Committee

MARCOS MARTINEZ, *Chair*

The Labor Immigration Committee convened in November 2019. We organized ourselves into three groups to take on this work. We made the following progress during the period before the pandemic:

- **Planning a summit on immigration issues.** We had planned to hold a statewide convening in the late spring of 2020, however we are now looking at Spring of 2021, most likely an online event.
- **Education and resourcing unions.** Creating a toolkit with benefits for excluded immigrant workers, COVID assistance, legal resources, help with DACA. Toolkit will be release in the Fall of 2020.
- **Naturalization assistance for union members.** Planning a citizenship clinic in March in western WA. Priorities for the next year will be to provide access to attorneys. Will need language access, buy-in from unions, more communication. Currently there is planning of a citizenship clinic in Central WA.

During COVID, we were able to shift the work in response to the heightened needs of immigrant workers presented by the pandemic. Many immigrant workers are essential workers, who have continued to go to work outside the home, risking their health and safety to ensure our communities are fed and cared for. There are also many immigrant workers who are in industries that have been hit hard by mass layoffs, with little or no access to a safety net.

Our committee continued to meet and highlight the issues facing immigrant workers and where solidarity was needed. There were several that came up during the pandemic where we added our support:

- Farm workers in Central Washington were left to bear the brunt of COVID-19 by state officials, making sure the food supply continued but with little enforced safety measures on the job. Our group joined with others helping to organize a caravan in support of striking farm workers in Yakima, supporting un-represented workers to file L&I safety complaints and pressured the governor to issue stronger protection measures.
- Our Unions along with Immigrant solidarity community groups pressured Governor Inslee to create an Immigrant Worker Relief Fund for undocumented workers who were not able to access stimulus relief or unemployment benefits during the pandemic. We joined in this campaign and succeeded in winning a \$40 million fund.
- Our committee helped with putting out a call to staff the Hotline operated by the Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network, which during the pandemic turned toward assisting immigrant workers and families with various issues they were facing related to COVID-19, safety on the jobs, and accessing relief resources. We coordinated with the hotline to make safety/organizing referrals for workers, to unions or worker centers in their industries. The hotline received hundreds of calls in the last 4 months.

In order to continue this work for 2021, the committee is contemplating a modest budget of:

Budget (2 budgets for Virtual or In-person): 2 Citizenship Clinics \$10,000; Labor Immigration Summit \$12,000 to \$18,000 (Online \$3,000 for interpretation); Interpretation & Language Justice \$5,000; Toolkit \$10,000 (printing and translation).