



Office of the General Assembly
Clifton Kirkpatrick, Stated Clerk

National Petition to End Sweatshops & Modern-Day Slavery in the Fields

WHEREAS, there is an ongoing human rights crisis in Florida's fields, including:

- poverty wages, rooted in an antiquated piece-rate pay system that hasn't changed significantly in nearly 30 years;
- long hours without overtime pay when work is available, unemployment and transience when it is not;
- physical abuse and wage fraud by crew leaders, supervisors, and growers;
- damage to body and soul from back-breaking labor, with no employment benefits such as sick days, paid leave, health insurance or pensions;
- retaliation against workers who protest or organize to alleviate these inhuman conditions;
- and, most heinously, modern-day slavery, with six successful federal prosecutions of farm labor operations for servitude in Florida over the past decade, and a seventh just initiated, involving well over 1,000 workers and more than a dozen farm employers;

WHEREAS, by leveraging their high-volume purchasing power to extract the lowest prices possible, Burger King and other food industry leaders profit from and play an active role in creating the miserable conditions in Florida's fields;

WHEREAS, Burger King has not only refused to join Yum! Brands and McDonald's in working with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) to improve farm labor conditions, but has actually sought to reverse gains made by workers in agreements with those corporations;

WHEREAS, private equity firms including Goldman Sachs, Texas Pacific Group, Bain Capital and others, which are principal shareholders in Burger King and other food industry leaders, have made significant investments in the restaurant industry over the past decade, and have ignored calls by farmworkers and consumers for farm labor reform, while continuing to draw billions of dollars in private profits from their investments;

THEREFORE, I add my name and voice to those of countless consumers calling upon Burger King and other food industry leaders to immediately join with the CIW in efforts to end exploitation in the fields and modern-day slavery in the 21st century. I am also prepared to stop patronizing Burger King now, and other food industry leaders in the future, should they fail to do so.

Specifically, I call on Burger King and other food industry leaders to:

- 1) Pay a penny more per pound for tomatoes and ensure that the increase is passed on to tomato pickers in the form of increased wages; and
- 2) Work with the CIW to establish and enforce a human rights-based code of conduct, including zero tolerance for forced labor, to ensure fair and safe working conditions.

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