## **CALIFORNIA RELIGIOUS LEADERS LETTER on A.B. 889**

August 1, 2011

Governor Edmund G. "Jerry" Brown, Jr. c/o State Capitol, Suite 1173 Sacramento, CA 95814

California State Senators State Capitol Sacramento, CA 94248-0001

Dear Governor Brown and California State Senators:

"Do not oppress the hired laborer who is poor and needy, whether they are one of your people or one of the sojourners in your land within you gates. Give them their wages in the daytime and do not let the sun set on them, for they are poor, and their life depends on it."

Deuteronomy 24:14-15

As leaders of faith communities across California, our religious teachings instruct us to respect human rights in the workplace and honor the dignity of all persons. Each day in California, 200,000 domestic workers perform vital services in private homes: caring for children, cleaning houses, and providing supportive services to seniors and disabled individuals. We value the work that they do. Without it, many of our lives would be much more difficult.

We are concerned because this work, while a growing and vitally important sector in the economy is not accountable to basic labor standards. Because this work is performed in private homes, behind closed doors, domestic workers are vulnerable and often subject to mistreatment and exploitation. We are deeply concerned that domestic workers continue to be an unprotected workforce in our state.

Sadly, lack of protection and rights for these workers is rooted in our country's shameful history of slavery and racism. For example, during the 1930's, Congress passed two key lawsthe National Labor Relations Act (NLRA)-provides right to organize into unions and bargain collectively and the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (FLSA)- provides right to federal minimum wage and overtime protections. However, domestic workers and farm workers were intentionally excluded from both laws. The majority of domestic and farm workers at that time were Black workers.

Although amendments have been made to redress many of the farm worker exclusions under both laws, the legacy of exclusions for domestic workers continues as both federal and California laws deny them either partially or completely from rights that other workers have to bargain collectively, to receive minimum wage and overtime pay, to work in a safe and health environment, and to receive workers compensation benefits.

We believe it is time to right this historic wrong. There is no reason that domestic workers should be treated differently than other workers. The State of New York is the first to recognize this with its recent passage of a Domestic Worker Bill of Rights in 2010.

Additionally, we have heard members of our congregations who employ domestic workers likewise call for a set of ethical standards. They believe that such standards would give direction to what it means to be a fair employer. Jessica Lehman, who employs a personal attendant in her home says:

"The Bill of Rights creates helpful guidelines for employers of domestic workers.

Employers have a vested self-interest in this campaign- by working to support the

Domestic Worker Bill of Rights, we are investing in building communication and trust
with workers who support some of the most intimate parts of our lives, providing home
care to people with disabilities and elders, or caring for our children and our home."

Employers in our congregations understand that it would also improve the quality of care for loved ones. While there do exist employers who want to do the right thing, we know that without any established standards or laws, sadly many workers will continue to be exploited. Implementing basic compensation and safety standards helps to strengthen the Care Industry, bringing it out of the shadows and raising the quality of care.

A.B 889, the Domestic Worker's Bill of Rights in California, would ensure basic standards and protections such as 1) overtime pay, 2) meals and rest breaks 3) worker's compensation for injured workers 4) reporting time pay, as well as specific benefits particular to the kind of work, such as the right to cook one's own food, and a right to 8 hours of uninterrupted sleep.

A.B. 889 would address the rampant unfair and inhumane conditions faced by workers like Maria who labored for months without any overtime or breaks:

"I cared for an elderly woman in her home. They paid me \$250 per week. Soon the duties increased and I was taking care of 3 people in the home for 24 hours a day. I was still being paid \$250 per week. I no longer had any free time to spend with my own children and family."

Another domestic worker, Helen, who was assigned by a cleaning agency to clean 4-5 homes a day, testified,

"I couldn't take a break to eat something or even to catch my breath. I was running from house to house without any break. If I was late to the next house, they would fire me."

As people of faith, we believe that people should be treated fairly and humanely in **all** work places. This is no less true for our homes, a sacred sphere where honor and dignity should be uplifted. Just as we believe that an injustice to one is an injustice to all, conversely, we believe that *dignity and respect* for one is dignity and respect for all of us.

We urge you to support and sign this bill, AB 889. We call on you to right the historic wrong that has left these workers vulnerable and unprotected, to set standards for employers who hire domestic workers, and to improve the quality of care and dignity for all in California homes. Your support and leadership on this issue can make California a state of which to be proud.

Sincerely,

## The undersigned Religious Leaders of California

## (Organizations listed for identification purposes)

The Rt. Rev. Marc Handley Andrus, Bishop of California, Episcopal Diocese

Rev. Eric Lee, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Los Angeles

Dr. Isa Aron, Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles

Ms. Suzan Berns, Jewish Community Relations Council, San Rafael

Rev. Lindi Ramsden, Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry, CA, Sacramento

Imam Shakeel Syed, Islamic Shura Council of Southern California, Anaheim

Rabbi Arnold Rachlis, University Synagogue, Irvine

Sister Colleen McDermott, Dominican Sisters of San Rafael, San Rafael

Sister Maire Sullivan, Sisters of the Presentation, San Francisco

President Jon Fish, Interfaith Council of Greater Sacramento

Rev. Martha Hodges, Unitarian Universalist Community Church, Sacramento

Rev. Roger Jones, Unitarian Universalist Society of Sacramento

Rev. Dr. Karen Oliveto, Glide Memorial Church, San Francisco

Rabbi Michelle Missaghieh, Temple Israel of Hollywood, Los Angeles

Sister Maria Elena Martinez, Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity, Emeryville

Rabbi Stephen J. Einstein, Congregation B'nai Tzedek, Fountain Valley

Rabbi Jill Zimmerman, Los Angeles

Rev. Stanley Long, South Bay Community Church, Fremont

Dr. Joanne Doi, Maryknoll Sisters, Berkeley

Rabbi Adam Rosenwasser, Congregation Beth Am, Los Altos Hills

Rabbi Leonard Beerman, Los Angeles

Rabbi Nelly Altenburger

Ms. Sara Fong, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Berkeley

Ms. Tiffany Crain, First Christian Church of Oakland, Oakland

Rabbi Melanie Aron, Congregation Shir Hadash, Los Gatos

Rev. Teresita Valeriano, Messiah Lutheran Church, Hayward

Rev. Kathleen Owens, First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego, San Diego

Rev. William Kennedy, UULM-CA, Redwood City

Rev. Jeremiah Kalendae, First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Francisco, San Francisco

Ms. Kristi Laughlin, East Bay Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, Oakland

Rabbi Laura Geller, Temple Emanuel, Los Angeles

Rabbi Howard Laibson, Congregation Shir Chadash, Lakewood

Rev. Douglas Johnstone, Lutheran Church, Long Beach

Sister Kathleen Healy, Sisters of the Presentation, San Francisco

Rabbi Jason van Leeuwen, Temple Ner Maarav, Encino

Rev. Rodney Yee, Congregational Church of Almaden Valley, San Jose

Rev. Kathleen Morrison, San Lorenzo Community Church (UCC), San Lorenzo

Sufi John Ishvaradas Abdallah, World Without Borders Interfaith Sufi Ashram, San Pedro

Father Richard Smith, Episcopal Church of St. John the Evangelist, San Francisco

Rev. William Ng, 1st Presbyterian Church Oakland, Oakland

Rev. Carol Been, CLUE California, San Jose

Rabbi Steven Jacobs, Progressive Faith Foundation, Woodland Hills

Rev. Susan Parsley, Forest Hill Christian Church, San Francisco

Lee Marie Sanchez, Unitarian Universalist, Huntington Beach

Rev. David Farley, Echo Park United Methodist Church, Los Angeles

Rev. Victoria Gray, Christ the Lord Episcopal Church, Pinole, CA, Vallejo

Rabbi Jerrold Goldstein, Leo Baeck Temple, Los Angeles,

Rev. Kathryn Schreiber, United Church of Hayward, UCC, Hayward

Rev. Kathleen Morrison, United Church of Christ, Oakland

Rev. Thomas Hill, California-Pacific Annual Conference - United Methodist Church, Pasadena

Rev. Jennifer Gutierrez, California-Pacific Conference, United Methodist Church, Los Angeles

Cantor David Reinwald, Temple Beth Sholom, Santa Ana

Rev. John Chamberlin, Hayward First United Methodist Church, Hayward

Rev. Susan Champion, Christ the Lord Episcopal Church, Pinole

Rev. Albert Cohen, Southern California Ecumenical Council, Pasadena

Rev. Jose Vindel, Rialto United Methodist Church, Rialto

Rev. Drew Nettinga, United Church of Christ, Hayward

Imam Mustafa Umar, Islamic Society of Corona-Norco, Corona

Rev. Timothy Svoboda, Youth With A Mission, San Francisco

Cantor Emerita Aviva Rosenbloom, Temple Israel of Hollywood, Los Angeles

Dr. Scott Sinclair, Episcopal Church, Kensington

Rev. Dr. Israel Alvaran, United Methodist Church, San Francisco

Rev. Anna Lange-Soto, Episcopal Church of El Buen Pastor, Redwood City

Rev. Michael Yoshii, Buena Vista UMC, Alameda

Rev. Janet Gollery McKeithen, Methodist Federation for Social Action

Rev. Nancy Brink, Chapman University, Orange

Rev. Dr. Ben Bohren, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Northern CA-NV

Mary Foran, Unitarian Universalist Community Minister, Oakland

Ms. Kathleen Newkirk, Mt Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church, Pleasant Hill

Ms. Roni Love, South Coast Interfaith Council Cerritos,

Mr. Jeffrey Hare, Church of Sojourners, San Francisco

Sister Laetitia Bordes, Society of Helpers, San Bruno

Rev. Stanley McKinney, Laguna Woods

Ms. Karol Svoboda, Youth With A Mission, San Francisco

Rev. Elizabeth Griswold, Irvine United Congregational Church, Irvine

Rabbi Yoel Kahn, Beth El, Berkeley

Ms. Darlene Raleigh, North Coast United Methodist, Oceanside

Ms. Roni Love, Temple Israel LB & South Coast Interfaith Council, Cerritos

Rev. Ronald Cox, Christ Lutheran Church Goleta

Elder Phil Fehrle, First Presbyterian Church, Burbank

Rabbi Susan Laemmle, Los Angeles

Ms. Lucy Boutte, National Farm Worker Ministry, Baldwin Park

Rev. Donna Wood, Park Presidio United Methodist Church, San Francisco

Imam Taha Hassane, Islamic Center of San Diego, San Diego

Rabbi Dorothy Richman, Albany

Rev. Alison Hendley, San Rafael 1st UMC, San Rafael

Rev. Joellynn Monahan, The Spiral Way, Oakland

Ms. Jane Affonso, Chair, Justice Ministry team, Evangelical Lutheran Churches of America, So CA Synod, Redondo Beach

Rev. Lloyd Wake, United Methodist Church, San Francisco

Ms. Judith Liteky, St. John of God Sanctuary Committee, San Francisco

Mr. Robert Lane, Immigration Task Force, Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church, Walnut Creek.

Cantor Jennifer Bern-Vogel, Congregation Emanu El, Redlands

Mr. Randall Heyn-Lamb, All Saints Episcopal Church, Pasadena

Rev. Dr. Barbara Rowe, Mill Valley

Mr. Jerry Bolick, Buddhist Church of San Francisco, San Francisco

Rev. Fred Merrick, Evangelical Lutheran Church, San Francisco

Rev. Gerry Brague, Chalice Christian Church, San Carlos

Rev. Norman Fong, Presbyterian Minister, San Francisco

Ms. Charlene Tschirhart, Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights, Oakland

Susan Lubeck, Director, Progressive Jewish Alliance & Jewish Funds for Social Justice, Oakland

Reverend Carol Hovis, Marin Interfaith Council, San Rafael

Rev. Bruce Murphy Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Novato

Rev. Deborah Lee, Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights- CLUE, Oakland

Rabbi Dan Goldblatt, Beth Chaim Congregation, Danville

Rev. Myong B. Choi, Church of Love El Sobrante, CA

Ms. Felicitas Galedary, Los Angeles Latino Muslims, Los Angeles

Cantor Alan Weiner, Temple Beth Hillel, Valley Village

Mr. John Pulvino, St. Cyprian Justice & Peace Ministry, Lakewood

Ms. Ani Zonneveld, Muslims for Progressive Values, Los Angeles

Mr. Johnson Reynolds, First United Methodist, San Rafael

Ms. Millie Phillips, First Unitarian Universalist Society of San Francisco, San Francisco

Cantor Gregory Yaroslow, Redlands

Ms. Randa Krakow, San Dieguito United Methodist Church, Encinitas

Mr. Carlos Flores, New Hope Covenant, Oakland

Elizabeth Copley, Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church, Walnut Creek

Mrs. Elizabeth McLeod, Concord United Methodist Church, Concord

Ms. Carolyn Francis, Claremont United Methodist Church, Claremont

Cantor Devorah Felder-Levy, Congregation Shir Hadash, Los Gatos

Ms. Lizzy Beach, Global Ministries, Stockton

Ms. Cornelia Spearing, Unitarian Universalists of San Mateo, Millbrae

Mrs. Lynn Bauer, Fairfax Community Church, UCC Fairfax

Rev. Pat Palmer, Unity In Marin, Novato

Ms. Lorna Wuertz, Presbyterian, Novato

Mr. Bob Kane, Progressive Jewish Alliance, San Francisco

Ms. Evelia Perez, Catholic Community, Richmond

Mr. Jack Bartlett, Community Church, UCC Mill Valley

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Ms. Sarah Blackburn, Marin Interfaith Council, San Rafael

Rev. Daniel Kane, Oakland

Rev. Christopher Bell, Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Santa Rosa

Rev. Julia Hamilton, Unitarian Society of Santa Barbara

Rev. Dr. Audrey Vincent, Unitarian Universalist Association, Santa Paula

Rev. Bill & Barbara Hamilton-Holway, Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley, Kensington

Ms. Nan Waltman, CLUE-Ventura County, Ventura

Rev. Dr. Jay Atkinson, Unitarian Universalist, El Sobrante

Rabbi Burt Jacobson, Kehilla Community Synagogue, Piedmont

Rev. Mark Carlson, Lutheran Office of Policy- CA, Sacramento

## RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION'S ENDORSEMENTS

Justice for Immigrants, San Jose

Islamic Shura Council of Southern California, Anaheim

Marin Interfaith Council, San Rafael

CLUE-Ventura County, Ventura

Berkeley Fellowship of Unitarian Universalists, Berkeley

Good Samaritans of the East Bay El Sobrante

Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights, Northern California

Muslims for Progressive Values, Los Angeles

St. Cyprian Justice & Peace Ministry, Lakewood

Park Presidio United Methodist Church, San Francisco

Islamic Center of San Diego, San Diego

San Lorenzo Community Church (UCC), San Lorenzo

Los Angeles Latino Muslims

Temple Beth Hillel, Valley Village

Synagogue Hashem, San Francisco

Echo Park United Methodist Church, Los Angeles

National Farm Worker Ministry, Baldwin Park

Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity, Emeryville

East Bay Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, Oakland

Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice- California