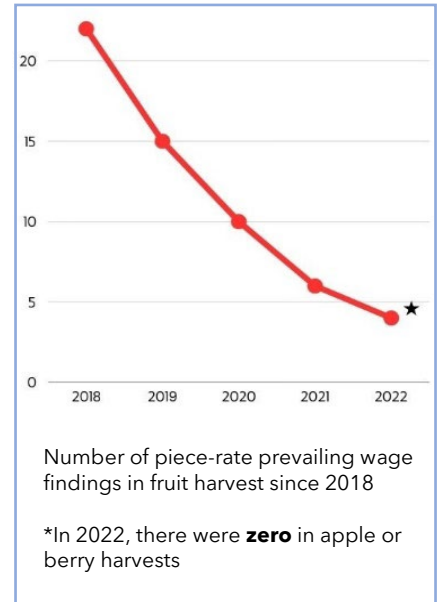


The continued increase in the number of H-2A temporary agricultural workers in WA is threatening to **significantly depress wages for local farmworker families**. The government’s failure to collect data on actual wages paid to farmworkers is driving down wages. HB 2226 and SB 5996 will help to improve the data collected that helps to set fair wages for farmworkers.

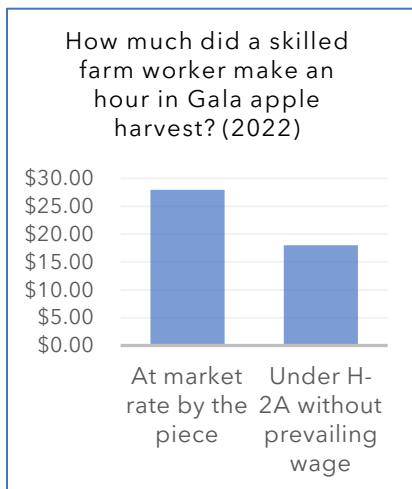
The agriculture industry is now bringing in more than **30,000 H-2A workers - as much as 1/3 of the harvest workforce and a 1,000% increase** in the use of the program since 2008. Bringing in workers from places with few economic opportunities tends to drive down wages in the local economy because those workers will accept any wage offered.

Prevailing wage failures: The government’s prevailing wage surveys are supposed to find out what workers are making in the real job market, and then set the baseline for wages at farms that use the H-2A system. But the responses from employers are not aligning with the reality in the fields, with fewer fair prevailing wage findings being set—the result being that wages are being driven down **by 20% to 50% or more** depending on the crop.



We must listen to farmworkers about their wages. ESD does a worker wage survey, but it cut back the survey in the pandemic, and it has criticized its own survey, saying that it is not big enough, and there isn’t enough data to evaluate possible bias. These bills mandate a

comprehensive worker survey, with in-person interviews and more data points so we can protect the real wages farmworkers are making in harvest.



HB 2226 & SB 5996 also help to improve data collection on other issues related to the H-2A program. For example, we know how many workers growers ask for on their H-2A applications. But the federal government does not report how many workers actually come to Washington. This is important information for monitoring the program and for disaster or epidemic response. These bills direct ESD to ask agricultural employers during field visits about how many H-2A workers have come and where they are living.