

The Children's Act for Responsible Employment & Farm Safety (CARE Act)

Dr. Ruiz introduced the CARE Act to raise labor standards and protections for farmworker children to the same level set for children in all other occupations.

Why the bill is needed:

Agriculture is the only industry with labor laws that allow children as young as 12 to work with virtually no restrictions on the number of hours they spend in the fields outside of the school day. In part because of such long, unregulated work schedules, a Human Rights Watch report found that children working in agriculture drop out of school at four times the national dropout rate.

A 2018 [GAO report](#) found that more than half of work-related fatalities for children happen in the agriculture sector. According to the National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety, every day at least 33 children are injured while working on U.S. farms. A child employee dies about every three days while working in agriculture.

What the bill does:

While retaining current exemptions for family farms the CARE Act would:

- Bring age and work hour standards for children in agriculture up to the standards for children working in all other industries;

	Existing Law for Agricultural Employment	Existing Law for Non-Agricultural Employment	CARE Act provisions
Non-Hazardous Job, Age 12-13	Can work outside of school hours with parental consent.	Prohibited	Prohibited
Non-Hazardous Job, Age 14-15	Can work outside of school hours without any restrictions on number of hours per day or per week.	Can work outside of school hours. Cannot work before 7 a.m. or after 7 p.m. or for more than 3 hours on a school day or more than 18 in a school week.	Imposes the same hour restrictions in place for non-ag workers on agricultural workers.
Hazardous, Age 16-17	Minimum age is 16 for hazardous jobs	Prohibited until age 18.	Prohibited until age 18.

- Establish a minimum penalty for child labor violations;
- Increase the maximum civil monetary penalties and maximum criminal penalties for child labor violations;
- Provide children with greater protections against pesticide exposure in agriculture by raising the labor protections to EPA standards.
- Create reporting requirements on work-related injuries and serious illness.