October 17, 2014

Don Thompson, CEO
McDonald's Corporation
2111 McDonald's Dr.,
Oak Brook, IL 60523

Dear Don,

The Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future is an academic research and education center based at the Bloomberg School of Public Health that investigates the interconnections between food systems, public health and the environment.
Reform of the United States immigration system is long overdue and we commend you for calling on the government to improve the nation's immigration system. As you know, immigration reform has a direct impact on the production and processing of our nation's food supply. It has been estimated by the organization Farmworker Justice, that 4.5 million farm workers and family members live in the United States with up to 75% of them being undocumented. Thousands more are employed in the slaughter plants and processing facilities that are part of our agricultural production system. Migratory and undocumented farm workers play a vital role in keeping the U.S. food system running, yet these workers routinely face environmental hazards that threaten their health, and can lead to broader public health concerns.

Beginning in November of 1960 with the release of CBS Reports program *Harvest of Shame*, the plight of migratory workers laboring to harvest U.S. produce was brought to the attention of the general public. Since that time, many more newspaper and magazine articles, documentaries, and news programs have continued to show the conditions under which migratory and undocumented workers toil and live, including exposure to pesticides, noxious gases, and novel infectious pathogens, unsafe procedures in processing facilities, lack of access to health care, inadequate housing and schooling, and poverty.

Approximately 10,000-20,000 pesticide poisonings, resulting in gastrointestinal distress, contact dermatitis, neurological symptoms, eye irritation and in some cases death occur among hired agricultural workers in the U.S. every year.[1] The actual number, however, is likely much higher due to underreporting and poor access and utilization of healthcare services. Repeated exposure to pesticides has been linked to increased risk of several

types of cancer, respiratory disease, neurodegenerative diseases, such as Parkinson's, adverse reproductive health outcomes and neuro-developmental delays in children.[2]

When manure decomposes, it releases 160 different gases, foremost among them hydrogen sulfide, ammonia, carbon dioxide, methane, and carbon monoxide. Even short-term exposure to these gases can cause respiratory problems in workers. In addition to the gases common in industrial food animal production, workers are exposed to particulate matter carrying allergens, dust, fecal particles and inorganic matter, which can cause temporary and chronic respiratory irritation including acute and chronic bronchitis, asthma-like syndrome, and organic dust toxic syndrome.[2]

In its final report, *Putting Meat on the Table: Industrial Farm Animal Production in America*, the Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production stated, "...the continuing recycling of viruses and other animal pathogens in large herds or flocks increases the opportunities for the generation of novel flu viruses through mutation or recombinant events that could result in more efficient human-to-human transmission. Such novel viruses not only put workers and animals at risk of infection but also may increase the risk of disease transmission to the communities were workers live."[3] Recent research has found increasing evidence that farm workers who work either in the fields or in food animal production facilities and those living near such facilities are exposed to antibiotic resistant bacteria and novel flu viruses.[3]

For example, new research, funded in part by the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, found that nearly half of workers who care for animals in large industrial hog farming operations in North Carolina could be carrying livestock-associated bacteria, including multi-drug resistant strains, in their nasal passages for up to four days after exposure, putting themselves, their families and their communities at risk.[4] Another study, which included data from 445,000 Pennsylvanian residents over a 10 year period, showed that those living in close proximity to crop fields fertilized with swine manure were more likely to be infected by methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus, commonly known as MRSA, and to experience skin and soft tissue infections.[5]

FDA data indicate that approximately 80% of the antibiotics sold in the United States are used in food animal operations. The misuse of antibiotics at non-therapeutic levels common in industrial food animal operations is a significant generator of antibiotic resistant bacteria, including resistant E. Coli, Campylobacter, Salmonella and Staphylococcus Aureus, and workers in these operations are at ground zero with little or no access to health care.

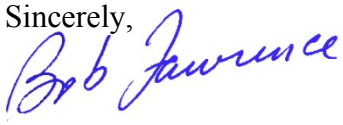
Without immigrant and migratory workers, the industrial produce and animal production system in the U.S. would collapse. It is time to acknowledge their critical role by considering immigration reform in the context of the public health threats these workers face, either through pesticides and toxic animal waste exposure in produce production, the dangerous conditions created by the industrial food animal production system, or the inherent dangers in the food animal processing system.

Production practices such as the routine misuse of antibiotics, a production system that promotes the generation and spread of novel flu viruses and antibiotic resistant bacteria,

and the toxic nature of industrial food animal system waste should be part of the debate on immigration policy. We call upon you, as an industry leader to partner with us in making sure that the public health threats faced by today's immigrant workers are at the forefront of immigration reform.

For more information please contact Robert Martin at rmarti57@jhu.edu or 410-502-7578. Thank you for your consideration of these timely and important issues.

Sincerely,



Robert S. Lawrence, Director