

California Becomes First State to Regulate Foreign Labor Recruiters With AB 1362

New law closes accountability gap; advocates stress awareness and push for expanded protections

Sacramento, CA (October 2, 2025) – Survivors of trafficking, worker advocates, business leaders, and lawmakers gathered today at the California State Capitol to celebrate Governor Gavin Newsom’s signing of AB 1362 (Kalra), a first-in-the-nation law that positions California as a leader against federal rollbacks of worker protections in the agricultural industry.

Though charging illegal recruitment fees and deceiving workers has long been unlawful, recruiters operating abroad have faced little oversight, enabling them to exploit workers with no consequences. As a result, temporary guest workers have routinely been tricked into debt bondage and forced labor, while ethical employers were undercut.

“This is about protecting the very people who put food on California’s tables,” said Assemblymember Ash Kalra (D–San Jose), author of AB 1362. “With this law, California is leading the nation in preventing trafficking and protecting both workers and responsible businesses.”

AB 1362 closes this accountability gap in the agricultural industry by requiring H-2A recruiters to register with the state and post a bond. These mechanisms ensure recruiters follow the law, benefiting the 40,000–50,000 agricultural workers recruited to California each year. Employers who hire through registered recruiters also receive a safe harbor from liability, ensuring fair competition and accountability in the system.

“As no regulatory framework exists nationally—or in any state—to hold foreign labor recruiters accountable, workers remain vulnerable to abuse before even setting foot in the United States,” said Aradhana Tiwari, Senior Policy Counsel at the Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative. “AB 1362 represents a major advance in California. It responds to well-documented abuses among H-2A agricultural workers, while also pointing to the need for broader protections across visa categories.”

Advocates underscored that this law is a breakthrough, but awareness is now essential. Workers must know their rights, employers must know there is a system they can trust, and other states must recognize that such a framework is possible where the federal government has failed.

“Now, we must make sure workers and employers know these protections exist,” said Joe Martínez, Executive Director of CIERTO. “This victory sets the stage for fair competition and a stronger agricultural economy.”

With AB 1362 signed into law, California reaffirms its leadership in worker protection and support for communities vulnerable to trafficking. Survivor voices made clear that while this law is a breakthrough, more must be done to extend protections across all visa categories.

“I was rescued 25 years ago but today we are still fighting for these rights and protections,” said Kanti Salgado, Survivor Leader. “This is why I believe AB 1362 is an important first step but I hope we continue to fight so all workers are protected one day.”

About the Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative

The Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative (SJI) at Loyola Law School is a practitioner-led, survivor-informed, and evidence-based policy initiative dedicated to ending human trafficking. Using an intersectional framework, SJI fills critical gaps in the field by fostering systemic change and advancing progressive policy solutions that protect vulnerable workers and support survivor leadership. For more information visit lls.edu/sunitajain

MEDIA CONTACT:

Veronica Orozco | 818.308.5848 | vorozco@tzunu.com



Assemblymember Ash Kalra

California State Assembly, District 25

Assemblymember Ash Kalra represents California's 25th Assembly District, covering much of San José, including downtown and southeast Santa Clara County. First elected in 2016, he became the first Indian American to serve in the California Legislature and was re-elected to his fifth term in 2024. He currently chairs the Assembly Judiciary Committee and serves on the Housing & Community Development, Labor & Employment, Natural Resources, and Utilities & Energy committees. Kalra is the author of AB 1362, landmark legislation to close loopholes in state law, hold foreign labor recruiters accountable, and protect temporary workers from trafficking and exploitation.



Udaya Kanti Salgadu

Survivor Leader, CAST | Consultant, Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative

Recruited from Sri Lanka at 18 and brought to the U.S. on a legal visa, Udaya Kanti Salgadu endured more than two years of labor trafficking before escaping and rebuilding her life. Today, she is a Certified Registered Nurse and a nationally recognized advocate for immigrant worker protections. As a Survivor Leader with the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST) and consultant with Loyola Law School's Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative, she works closely with policymakers, survivor networks, and community organizations. Drawing on her lived experience, Kanti champions legislation such as AB 1362 and continues to press for broader protections for all temporary guest workers.



Joe Martinez

Co-Founder, CIERTO

Joe is the co-founder of CIERTO, where he pioneered an H-2A recruiting and training model that delivers value across the labor supply chain. He has worked extensively with NGOs, governments, and growers to establish transparent, ethical labor agreements that protect migrant farmworkers from fraud and trafficking while providing strong returns for employers. His career has focused on building cooperation between Mexican state governments, worker communities of origin, North American growers, international retailers, and labor representatives. Joe holds a B.A. in International Political Economy and Comparative History of Ideas from the University of Washington.



Aradhana Tiwari, Esq.

Senior Policy Counsel, Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative

Aradhana Tiwari is Senior Policy Counsel with the Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative at Loyola Law School. She brings nearly a decade of experience representing immigrants and survivors of trafficking facing deportation, beginning her legal career with CAST in 2014 and later leading a Bay Area project providing direct services and outreach to survivors. Aradhana has represented dozens of immigrants from various countries across diverse industries who were trafficked after entering on legal work visas. Informed by this work and by survivor leadership, she now advances systemic policy reforms to prevent trafficking, de-criminalize survivors, and expand protections for immigrant workers through legislation such as AB 1362.

Survivor Voices

Recruitment abuse takes many forms—but agriculture has long been one of the most visible and vulnerable sectors. In 2014, “Miguel” (name changed for privacy) was recruited from Mexico on an H-2A visa to pick avocados in California. After paying illegal fees, he arrived to overcrowded housing, irregular pay, and threats of deportation if he spoke out. Along with dozens of other workers, he was trapped in debt bondage until inspectors intervened. His story shows how existing protections—like bans on illegal fees and contracts in workers’ languages—were meaningless without accountability. For years, recruiters abroad faced no oversight and rarely faced consequences. AB 1362 changes that by requiring H-2A recruiters to register with the state, post a bond, and operate under state oversight—ensuring rights on paper can finally be enforced, protecting 40,000–50,000 agricultural workers recruited to California each year and giving ethical employers a system they can trust.

Beyond agriculture, trafficking also thrives in caregiving, domestic work, and service industries. The survivors below are available for interviews and advocacy. Their voices illustrate how exploitation begins with recruiters across industries—and why AB 1362 is a critical first step that lays the groundwork for broader protections in the future.



Angela came to the U.S. from the Philippines on a legal visa, believing she had secured a good job. Instead, she was forced to work 18-hour days in a retirement home near Los Angeles, sleeping on the floor and under constant threats of deportation. After two years, she was rescued by the FBI and later testified against her trafficker, who was sentenced to prison. Today, Angela is a Certified Nurse’s Assistant and serves as a Survivor Leader with CAST and the Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative, using her experience to advocate for stronger protections like AB 1362.

Angela Guanzon



Avelino migrated to California after paying thousands in recruitment fees for a promised janitorial job. Instead of fair wages and security, he faced exploitative conditions—his pay withheld, his documents taken, and his freedom restricted. Burdened by debt and threats of deportation, he endured abuse before finding a path to safety. His experience underscores how recruiters profit by charging illegal fees and misrepresenting contracts, leaving workers trapped in debt. AB 1362 directly addresses these abuses by requiring contracts in workers’ languages and banning recruitment fees.

Avelino Reloj

Survivor Voices



Originally from the Philippines, Jayson was recruited to the U.S. by a recruiter he trusted, with false promises of decent wages and stable work. Here on a P-1 Visa for athletes, Jayson was forced to work in home health care facilities under exploitative conditions, with his recruiter withholding key information and misrepresenting his rights. Jayson has since shared his testimony publicly, including with lawmakers and the Governor's office, to advocate for accountability and protections that would have prevented his exploitation. He understands AB 1362 is an important first step and is hopeful that with this bill, California can extend these protections against foreign labor recruiters to all visa categories.

Jayson de Guzman



Kanti was only 18 when she immigrated to Los Angeles after being recruited to work as a domestic worker. Arriving on a B-1 visa, she unknowingly signed English-only documents and was soon trapped in exploitative conditions—working long hours without pay, cut off from her family, and subjected to verbal and physical abuse. For more than two years, she endured isolation and fear with no idea where to turn for help. After eventually escaping, she rebuilt her life, learned English, and became a Certified Registered Nurse. Even after many years, it remains difficult for her to tell her story, but she shares it in hopes that policymakers will strengthen laws like AB 1362 and protect others from suffering in silence.

Udaya Kanti Salgadu



AB 1362 (Kalra): Holds Recruiters Accountable, Protects Agricultural Workers

In 2014, California passed SB 477 to hold labor recruiters accountable. **But due to a drafting error**, it applied only to H-2B workers—less than 3% of the 350,000 guest workers now entering annually. **AB 1362 corrects this gap**, extending protections to 40,000–50,000 H-2A agricultural workers.

The Problem

- **No accountability** for recruiters charging illegal fees, making false promises, and entrapping workers
- **No recourse** for workers when abuses occur
- **No federal or state law** protects workers or safeguards ethical businesses

Why It Matters

- **Labor shortages are intensifying**; federal enforcement creates fear and instability
- **Federal rollbacks are weakening** H-2A and other programs
- **Even the President of the Western Growers Association urges H-2A expansion** and fewer barriers; warns food production is strained

California's Opportunity

- **Lead the nation:** be the first state to stop recruiters from exploiting temporary agricultural workers.
- **Build a scalable framework of protection** for all temporary workers.

AB 1362 protects workers and ethical businesses by:

- **Recruiters follow the law:** no recruitment fees, no confiscating ID documents, contracts in workers' native language
- **Recruitment scammers can no longer target and defraud** immigrant workers during the recruitment process
- **A public registry of recruiters** is maintained by the Labor Commissioner
- **Businesses are protected** by a safe harbor provision when they use registered recruiters



Case Example

"Miguel" (name changed for privacy) was recruited from Mexico on an H-2A visa to pick avocados in California. He paid recruitment fees and was promised steady wages, but instead was housed with 34 men in overcrowded conditions, left unpaid for weeks, and threatened with deportation if he spoke out. Only after inspectors intervened did he learn of his rights. AB 1362 prevents this abuse by ensuring transparency and accountability before workers ever arrive.

Sponsors



Loyola Law School
Loyola Marymount University
Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative

**FREEDOM
UNITED**



JUSTICE AT LAST



CHIRLA
Coalition for Humane
Immigrant Rights

Learn More

For the full fact sheet with additional background, legislative history, and case studies, visit: lls.edu/sunitajain/AB-1362

Contact

Stephanie Richard – stephanie.richard@lls.edu
Aradhana Tiwari – aradhana.tiwari@lls.edu

Broad Support for AB 1362

AB 1362 has earned support from national leaders, survivor advocates, and tens of thousands of Californians. Together, they send a clear message: California must lead in stopping trafficking at the source.

“Each year in the U.S. Trafficking in Persons Report we documented how foreign labor recruiters (FLRs) exploited those who legally travel for work. The abuses do not just occur ‘over there,’ but take place in the U.S.—and especially in the economic powerhouse of California... Given the magnitude of the problem and the resulting inequities negatively affecting individual workers (both foreign and domestic) and California’s competitive landscape, we enthusiastically support AB 1362.”

—U.S. Ambassadors to Combat Trafficking in Persons



Nancy Ely-Raphel



Mark Lagon



Luis C. de Baca



Susan Coppedge



John Cotton Richmond



Cindy Dyer

AB 1362 is endorsed by all living former U.S. Ambassadors to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, across Republican and Democratic administrations.

44,393 Californians signed to expand SB 477 beyond H-2B.



“As a recruiter, I want to compete on a level playing field. We invest time and money to ensure our recruitment is clean. But bad actors undercut that effort—charging fees, making false promises and turning a blind eye to abuse. AB 1362 helps fix that by making transparency the standard across the board.”

Joe Martinez, H-2A Recruiter and Co-Founder of CIERTO



“So many temporary workers come to California full of hope, only to find themselves exploited, silenced and forgotten. Their stories, like mine, often remain in the shadows. That’s why AB 1362 matters. It would make sure workers are properly informed about the terms of their employment and visa. It would demand transparency from recruiters and employers. And it would close the loopholes that allow labor trafficking to flourish in silence.”

Avelino Reloj, Survivor Leader

Former Senate Pro Tem and author of SB 477, Darrell Steinberg, has repeatedly affirmed the original intent of his legislation:

“The intent of SB 477 was to protect all temporary workers coming to California, including H-2A workers.”

—Senator Darrell Steinberg

Together, these voices show broad, bipartisan support for AB 1362—and why the Governor must sign it into law.

STAY CONNECTED

Follow the Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative to learn more and support the campaign:



Website

lls.edu/sunitajain/AB-1362



Instagram

[@sunitajainlls](https://www.instagram.com/sunitajainlls)



Facebook

[@sunitajainlls](https://www.facebook.com/sunitajainlls)



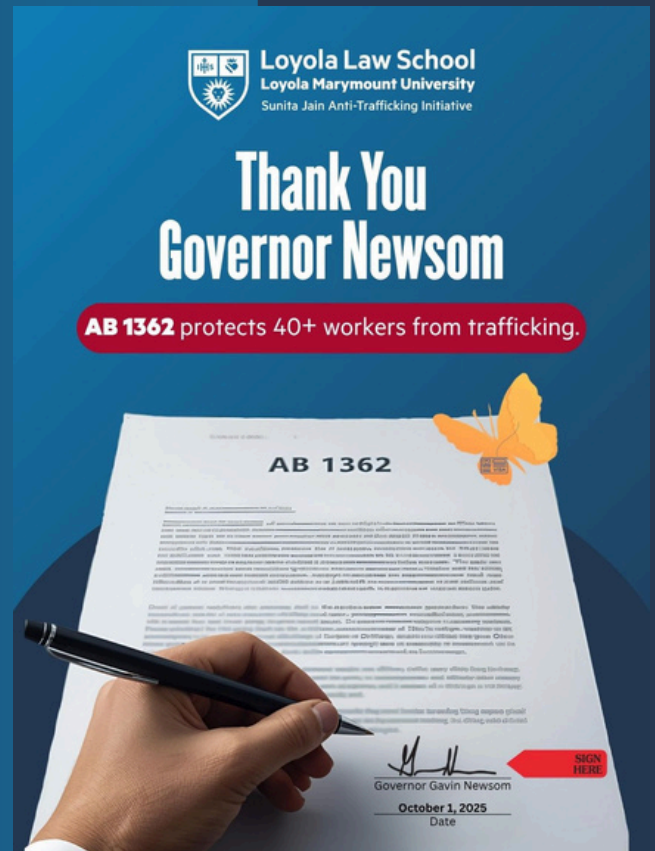
X (Twitter)

[@sunitajainlls](https://twitter.com/sunitajainlls)



LinkedIn

[linkedin.com/company/sunita-jain-initiative](https://www.linkedin.com/company/sunita-jain-initiative)



Campaign Hashtags

#AB1362 | #ProtectWorkers |
#StopTraffickingAtTheSource | #HumanTrafficking



Loyola Law School
Loyola Marymount University
Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative