

December 21, 2017

Mr. Michael J. Brown  
The National Chicken Council  
1152 Fifteenth Street, NW, Suite 430  
Washington DC 20005

Dear Mr. Brown:

On behalf of the 1.3 million member United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) union family, more than 70,000 of whom work in America's poultry industry, we are writing to express our concern for the fact that many poultry companies are using forced, exploited, or incarcerated labor to keep wages low.

This is not responsible or moral behavior, and as a leading voice of the poultry industry, it would make a difference if the National Chicken Council condemned these practices publicly and insisted on all of your member companies to do the same by agreeing to a code of conduct that puts an end to this reprehensible behavior.

We look forward to the opportunity to work with you to craft this code of conduct, but believe the minimum standard for any company must include a commitment to:

- **Not use forced, incarcerated, or prison labor of any kind** – including work release programs like the one that resulted in [the death of Frank Dwayne Ellington](#) in a Koch Foods plant in Ashland, Alabama, or the past use of detained workers from the Macon Diversion Center to [avoid hiring local workers](#) at Crider Foods in Stillmore, Georgia.
- **Not participate in fake rehabilitation programs** – America's problems with drug addiction and crime are real, and can only be fixed through treatment and rehabilitation by qualified professionals. Working full-time in a poultry plant is not adequate for recovery or to prevent recidivism. Programs like [the one at Simmons Foods in Oklahoma](#) take away local jobs and don't help our communities become safer or beat drug addiction.
- **Not use programs that pay a subminimum wage** – poultry work is difficult and dangerous and should be compensated well. No poultry company should use a program that pays less than a minimum wage to workers for their hard work and expertise, like West Liberty Poultry [did for decades to disabled men](#) from Texas.
- **Not employ underage workers** – a slaughterhouse is never a place for a child. But too often, underage workers have been reported at poultry plants like [Case Farms in Ohio](#) or [Agriprocessors in Iowa](#).

The fact that some of your member companies have continued to operate in such an irresponsible manner is bringing shame upon the entire poultry industry and devaluing the skilled work of hundreds of thousands of hard-working men and women. This disgraceful practice also damages the reputation of responsible companies and our members who have good jobs working in poultry plants.

The time has come for the National Chicken Council to take an active, public role in promoting responsible employment practices among its members and ending the use of forced and exploited labor in the poultry industry. We believe poultry jobs should allow hard-working people to build the better lives they have earned and deserve, and we look forward to your leadership on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

  
International President