

## SWORN STATEMENT OF NELDA GASTELUM

1. My name is Nelda Gastelum. I currently <sup>111 32 H</sup>reside in Sunnyside, Washington.
2. I worked for the Washington Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) from 1985 until my retirement in September 2000. I worked for the State of Washington for 30 years.
3. I supervised the Bilingual Claims Unit of the Industrial Insurance (Workers' Compensation) Division of L&I from when the Unit was created in January 1991 until my retirement.
4. L&I created the Bilingual Claims Unit in response to serious concerns from the community that Latino farm workers did not have equal and fair access to the workers' compensation system. Spanish-speaking farm workers were having great difficulties with the claims process, the notices, and the appeals process. As a result, many workers with legitimate claims were not receiving the compensation and medical treatment to which they were entitled.
5. While I supervised the Bilingual Claims Unit, we did outreach to the farm worker community to explain the requirements of the law, the forms, the notices, and how to respond to them. These outreach efforts included regular presentations on Spanish-language radio and at day care centers, community meetings, and union meetings. We did not have the staff or resources to meet the need for this information, but there was a positive community response to what we could offer.
6. The Bilingual Claims Unit also helped to resolve problems that Spanish-speaking farm workers had with their claims. When I retired, the Unit included six claims managers in Yakima, one in Kennewick (Tri-Cities area), and one in Wenatchee.