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Immigrant workers from Michoacán have a new ally on their side.

The United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 881 and the Secretary of Migration for the State of Michoacán, Mexico will sign an agreement of collaboration on Saturday, June 28th, 2014 at Casa Michoacán at noon. The objective of this agreement is to strengthen the efforts of the immigrant workers from Michoacán in their struggle to organize for better working conditions. The food and commercial industry in Illinois employ a huge number of immigrant workers that are generally exploited and abused. Some of the common abuses are wage theft, hazardous working conditions, and sexual harassment.

“Finding allies to defend the human rights of our Michoacán nationals abroad is a priority for the government of the state of Michoacán de Ocampo,” stated the professor Luis Carlos Chavez Santacruz the secretary of migrants for the state of Michoacán.

“The agreement we are signing is a step in the right direction to let the millions of immigrant workers from Michoacán know that they have an alternative when faced with abusive working conditions,” said Ron Powell, President of Local 881 UFCW and Vice-President, UFCW International. Local 881 represents more than 34,000 members in the retail industry in Illinois and Northwestern Indiana. The UFCW International represents 1.3 million members.

“We celebrate this agreement of collaboration. It is an example of how unions, community, and political organizations can support transnational families,” said Jose Luis Gutierrez, Director of Casa Michoacán.

Official reports conclude that there are three million immigrants from Michoacán in Illinois, making Illinois one of the States that has the most immigrants from Michoacán. The guests attending the celebration of this agreement are various elected officials from both countries including presidents of hometown associations.

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Local 881 UFCW represents 34,000 members employed in retail food and drug stores throughout Illinois and Northwest Indiana, as well as a professional division comprised of health and nursing home workers, barbers and cosmetologists, and workers in other retail and service industries. Among the companies under contract with Local 881 are Jewel Food Stores, Osco Drug, Mariano's Fresh Market, CVS Pharmacy, Kroger, Schnucks, and many smaller chains and independent stores, as well as nursing homes and other business establishments. Local 881 is among the largest affiliates of the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, which represents 1.3 million members in the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico.