



March 22, 2021

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell:

The Agriculture Workforce Coalition strongly urges the Senate to pass an agriculture labor reform bill this Congress that provides the solution American agriculture needs.

We write to you today with continued concern for our nation's agricultural producers. America's farmers have faced an onslaught of challenges: the COVID-19 pandemic, catastrophic weather events, retaliatory tariffs in our top export markets, and falling commodity prices and farm income just to name a few. However, the labor shortage remains one of their greatest challenges, impacting farmers today and jeopardizing the future of American agriculture. We must address this workforce crisis threatening farms across the United States so our producers can continue to feed, clothe, and fuel our nation. Doing so requires providing stability for our existing workers and key reforms to the H-2A program, the visa program farmers use to hire legal workers to supplement their U.S. workforce. The House recently passed bipartisan legislation attempting to solve this issue. We implore the Senate to put forward its ideas and solutions to pass legislation in a bipartisan manner to address our agricultural workforce challenges.

Farmworkers in this country continue to face uncertainty. U.S. agriculture needs a solution for farmworkers to stay and work in agriculture legally. Entire sectors of agriculture struggle to fill open jobs on the farm by not currently having access to the H-2A program due to its seasonal requirement. Producers with year-round labor needs must be eligible to participate in the H-2A guestworker program without arbitrary limits. The existing H-2A program is cumbersome and expensive. H-2A employers are required to pay workers a flawed survey-based wage rate set using data that does not take into account the value of other expensive mandated benefits. Farmers need a predictable wage rate that enables them to budget and ensure their businesses remain competitive in a global marketplace.

Without immediate action by the Senate, many farmers do not see a future in labor-intensive agriculture as the margins between profitability and loss disappear due to the federal government's outdated policies and broken immigration system. As representatives of agricultural organizations throughout the United States, we stand ready to help you develop and pass legislation to fully address the needs of American farmers by stabilizing the current workforce, addressing enormous costs to use the H-2A program, and enabling year-round producers to access the H-2A program.

Thank you for your urgent attention to solving America's agricultural labor crisis.

Sincerely,

American Farm Bureau Federation
AmericanHort
Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association
National Council of Agricultural Employers
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Farmers Union
National Milk Producers Federation
National Pork Producers Council
National Potato Council
United Fresh Produce Association
USAFarmers
U.S. Apple Association
Western Growers

cc: U.S. Senate