



March 28, 2017

President Donald Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

America's farmers and ranchers are encouraged by your comments during your February 28 address to a Joint Session of Congress, where you stated, "I believe that real and positive immigration reform is possible, as long as we focus on the following goals: to improve jobs and wages for Americans, to strengthen our nation's security, and to restore respect for our laws." Mr. President, we stand ready to help you do just that.

Farming in America is a growth industry and a world-class example of something America does better than anyone else. The many agricultural products we produce, harvest and process comprise one of the few sectors of our economy in which the U.S. has a trade surplus with the rest of the world. Agriculture makes up a significant portion of the overall U.S. economy. In fact, agriculture and agriculture-related industries contributed \$985 billion to the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) in 2014, a 5.7 percent share, and 17.3 million full- and part-time jobs were related to agriculture, which is 9.3 percent of total U.S. employment. In addition, food manufacturing accounts for 14 percent of all U.S. manufacturing jobs.

However, the economic health of food and fiber producers, and the rural communities in which they live, is threatened by the lack of a reliable, stable and legal workforce. Our farmers face growing shortages of legally authorized and experienced workers each year. Jobs in agriculture are physically demanding, conducted in all seasons and are often transitory. This shortage of labor negatively impacts our economic competitiveness, local economies, and jobs. Reforms are necessary to address the agricultural labor shortage.

A common misconception is that agriculture is a low wage paying industry. However, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, wages for U.S. fieldworkers rose 36 percent over the past decade through the conclusion of last year's harvest in October, compared with 27 percent wage increases for non-farm employees. Not only is agriculture competitive with other industries in terms of wages, many U.S. jobs are created for each farmworker hired, and those U.S. jobs tend to be year-round jobs. In fact, every farmworker engaged in high-value labor intensive crop and livestock production sustains two to three off-farm but farm-dependent jobs. The activities that occur on domestic farms support not only farmworkers, but also an entire supply chain of transportation providers, input suppliers, processors and consumer retail functions.

Many of those American jobs will be lost if access to agriculture's current workforce is jeopardized without providing a mechanism for future legal workers. The economic health of many rural economies is largely dependent on a strong agriculture sector. At a time when many factories have closed and communities have been decimated, agriculture continues to be a bright spot. Yet the loss of the foreign-born workforce in rural communities will have the same economic impact on those communities as factories closing and moving to other countries. We believe that these contributions to the U.S. economy and American jobs fall in line with your comments.

Furthermore, we want to work with you to strengthen our nation's security. We support strengthening our border, and we believe to do so, we must also relieve pressure on the border by providing a lawful path for foreign workers to enter the U.S. on a nonimmigrant basis. Despite employers' best efforts, much of the agricultural workforce is in the U.S. without proper work authority. And while many others in agriculture can attempt to utilize the current but dysfunctional H-2A temporary and seasonal guest worker program, those with dairy, livestock, and mushroom operations cannot utilize this or any other program because of their year-round, rather than seasonal, need. For dairy farmers, cows must be milked twice a day, 365 days a year. Thus they are left without any legal channel to find workers when U.S. workers are simply not available or not interested. In addition to maintaining access to our current workforce, agriculture needs a new program that meets the needs of our diverse industry and functions as efficiently as the current free market while providing the security of legal, documented temporary workers. In addition to

maintaining access to our current workforce, in the short term the H-2A program must be reformed to function more efficiently and effectively for all of agriculture. For the long term, agriculture needs a new guest worker program based on free-market principles that meets the needs of our diverse industry and provides U.S. agriculture with reliable access to a legal workforce.

Lastly, agriculture wants to work with you to restore respect for and enforcement of our nation's laws. Enforcement of our immigration laws is critical to any successful immigration system; however, because there is no other industry with greater workforce demographic challenges and foreign labor reliance than agriculture we must work together to ensure our agricultural economy stays strong. Our farmers want to follow the rule of law and would welcome an E-Verify system that is simple, efficient, effective, and certain so long as reforms to our current immigration system allow for work authorization for experienced agricultural workers and a new, flexible visa program for long-term stability and applicability to all agricultural industries. Based on a farm labor study conducted by the American Farm Bureau Federation in 2014, an enforcement-only approach to immigration that causes agriculture to lose access to its workforce would result in agricultural output falling by 30 to 60 billion dollars.

Reforms to the immigration system can ensure that American agriculture has a legal, stable supply of workers, both in the short- and long-term, for all types of agriculture including those with year-round labor needs, such as dairy and livestock. Simply put, farm employers cannot grow and create jobs unless they know they will have workers, today and tomorrow, to help with harvesting, caring for livestock, and feeding the world.

We can and must do better for our economy and country by modernizing our immigration system to include work eligibility for our existing workforce and farmer-friendly programs to provide future legal guest workers. Done properly, reform will deter illegal immigration, protect and complement our U.S. workforce, better respond to changing economic and demographic needs, and generate greater productivity and economic activity.

Thank you and we look forward to working together.

Respectfully,

Agricultural Council of California  
Agricultural Retailers Association  
Agri-Mark, Inc.  
Alabama Farmers Cooperative, Inc.  
Almond Alliance of California  
Amcot, Inc.  
American Beekeeping Federation  
American Farm Bureau Federation  
AmericanHort  
American Mushroom Institute  
American Sugar Cane League  
Apricot Producers of California  
Aurora Cooperative  
California Canning Peach Association  
California Citrus Mutual  
California Date Commission  
California Dried Plum Board  
California Fig Advisory Board  
California Fresh Fruit Association  
California Strawberry Commission  
California Walnut Commission  
Ceres Solutions, LLP  
Co-Alliance, LLP  
Cooperative Network  
CropLife America  
Dairy Business Milk Marketing Cooperative  
Idaho Dairywomen's Association  
Iowa Institute for Cooperatives  
Farm Credit East

Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association  
Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association  
Gulf Citrus Growers Association  
Michigan Farm Bureau  
Michigan Milk Producers Association  
National All-Jersey  
National Cotton Council  
National Cotton Ginners Association  
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives  
National Council of Agricultural Employers  
National Farmers Union  
National Grange  
National Milk Producers Federation  
National Onion Association  
National Peach Council  
National Potato Council  
North American Blueberry Council  
Northwest Farm Credit Services  
Northwest Food Processors Association  
NORPAC Foods, Inc.  
Olive Growers Council of California  
Oregon Cherry Growers, Inc.  
Pacific Coast Producers  
Producers Cooperative Association  
South East Dairy Farmers Association  
Southern States Cooperative, Inc.  
Sun-Maid Growers of California  
Sunsweet Growers, Inc.  
United Dairymen of Arizona  
United Egg Producers  
United Fresh Produce Association

U.S. Apple Association

USA Farmers

USA Rice

U.S. Sweet Potato Council

U.S. Tobacco Cooperative Inc.

Valley Fig Growers

Western Growers

Western United Dairymen

Wine Institute

Yuma Fresh Vegetable Association