

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 24, 2022

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

We write with grave concern to the Department of State's proposed 63% increase in fee cost for the vital H-2A Visa from \$190 to \$310 (Temporary Worker Performing Agricultural Services Unavailable in the United States). As you know, these adjustments to the Schedule of Fees for Consular Services of the Bureau of Consular Affairs were published December 29, 2021.

Originating from the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, the H-2A visa program remains a crucial tool for U.S. employers to sponsor foreign laborers to work in the U.S. agricultural industry if employers verify there were no U.S. workers "who are able, willing, qualified, and available to do the temporary work."¹ The number of H-2A visas issued has quadrupled since 2007, rising from 50,791 in FY2007 to 213,394 in FY2020. Current estimates also project a 10% increase annually for program applicants. Data reveals that the H-2A visa was the only routine visa type to expand from 2019 to 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic.²

Farmers and other agricultural employers utilizing the H-2A program do not employ only one worker per season, but rather rely on many. When calculating a 10% increase in fees for the onboarding process per employee when jumping from \$190 to \$310, farmers will now be forced to pay a much larger cost collectively.³ Most farms must budget onboarding costs of H-2A employees a year in advance. The decision to not roll out this increase gradually over time will negatively impact agricultural producers. The agriculture industry is grappling with an incredible labor shortage and these proposals would be detrimental to domestic production.

The mission of the H-2A visa is to provide fair opportunities for American agricultural producers to fill jobs — not disadvantage them by drastically increasing fees when the industry already faces rising costs. We strongly urge you to reconsider this proposed rule change and keep the H-2A visa fee at its current level of \$190.

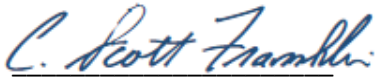
¹ <https://www.uscis.gov/working-in-the-united-states/temporary-workers/h-2a-temporary-agricultural-workers>

² <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/look-h-2a-growth-and-reform-2021-and-2022#:~:text=About%2080%20percent%20of%20H,April%2C%20and%2034%2C000%20in%20May.>

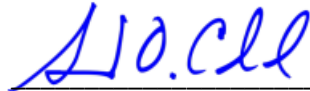
³ https://www.agsafe.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/H2A-Guestworker-Visa-Program-Cost-Estimator_Printable-Tool.pdf

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to receiving your response in a timely manner.

Sincerely,



C. Scott Franklin
Member of Congress



Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress



Pete Sessions
Member of Congress



Kat Cammack
Member of Congress



Maria Elvira Salazar
Member of Congress



David G. Valadao
Member of Congress



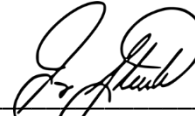
Vicente González
Member of Congress



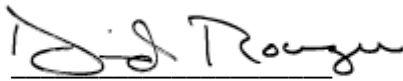
Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress



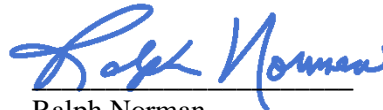
Mario Díaz-Balart
Member of Congress



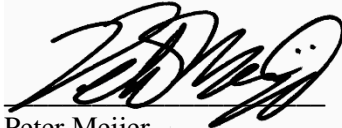
W. Gregory Stuebe
Member of Congress



David Rouzer
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Ralph Norman
Member of Congress



Peter Meijer
Member of Congress



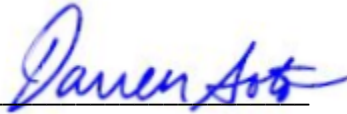
David J. Trone
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Kelly Armstrong
Member of Congress



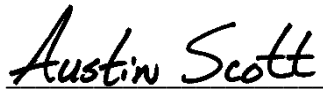
Antonio Delgado
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress



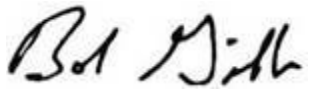
Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress



Austin Scott
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Eric A. "Rick" Crawford
Member of Congress



Bob Gibbs
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Tom Rice
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Charlie Crist
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Bill Huizenga
Member of Congress



Madison Cawthorn
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Elise M. Stefanik
Member of Congress



Al Lawson
Member of Congress



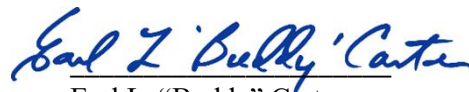
John H. Rutherford
Member of Congress



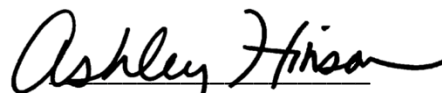
Neal P. Dunn, M.D.
Member of Congress



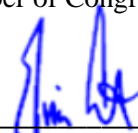
Liz Cheney
Member of Congress



Earl L. "Buddy" Carter
Member of Congress



Ashley Hinson
Member of Congress



Jim Costa
Member of Congress



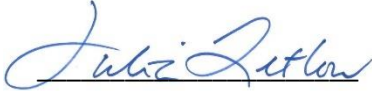
John Katko
Member of Congress



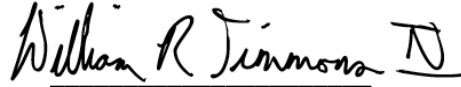
Fred Upton
Member of Congress



Carlos A. Gimenez
Member of Congress



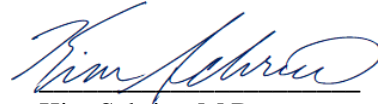
Julia Letlow
Member of Congress



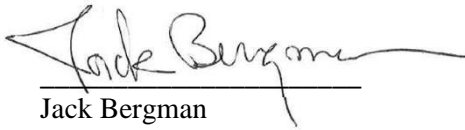
William R. Timmons, IV
Member of Congress



John R. Moolenaar
Member of Congress



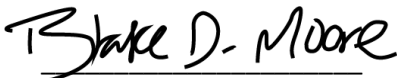
Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress



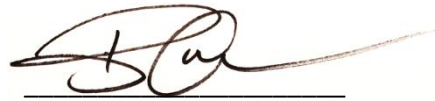
Jack Bergman
Member of Congress



A. Drew Ferguson, IV
Member of Congress



Blake Moore
Member of Congress



Burgess Owens
Member of Congress