

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 23, 2019

The Honorable Chad F. Wolf  
Acting Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Acting-Secretary Wolf:

The recently passed Fiscal Year 2020 Further Consolidated Appropriations bill provides you with authority, in consultation with the Secretary of Labor, to lift the existing 66,000 H-2B visa cap upon finding that too few Americans are available to fill our nation's need for seasonal workers. Your predecessors used similar authority to provide 30,000 additional visas in FY 2019, and 15,000 additional visas in FY 2017 and FY 2018. Today, we ask that you exercise this authority to increase the total number of H-2B visas for FY 2020 to the maximum allowable by law.

The continued tightening of the labor market warrants this increase. When the Department of Labor opened the H-2B visa application window this past January, it immediately received applications for over 96,400 H-2B worker positions, nearly triple the 33,000 H-2B visas available for the second half of the fiscal year. This wave of applications reflected a severe shortage of seasonal workers in a very tight labor market. Because the national unemployment rate has dropped from 4 percent at the start of 2019, to just 3.5 percent today, seasonal businesses will surely face an even more difficult time getting the staff they need to operate in the upcoming season.

The fact is that many areas of our country simply lack the working-age population needed to meet the demand for seasonal jobs. In some industries, particularly tourism, we fear that the demand for workers so far outstrips the available supply that businesses could be forced to curtail operations, putting at risk the jobs of American workers who fill year-round positions at these establishments.

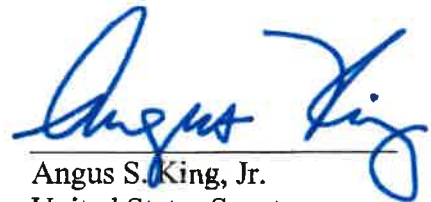
We hope that you see the need for these additional visas, and that you understand the economic importance of them to seasonal businesses around the country. We also ask that you release the additional visas as soon as possible, so that employers can prepare properly for the upcoming season.

We thank you for your attention to this urgent request.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator



Lisa A. Murkowski  
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



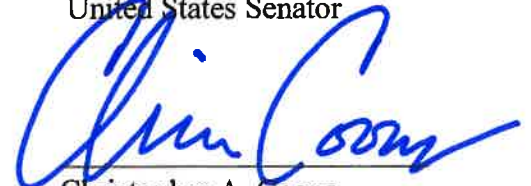
Daniel S. Sullivan  
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper  
United States Senator



Lindsey O. Graham  
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator



James Lankford  
United States Senator



Mike Crapo  
United States Senator



John Cornyn  
United States Senator



Patrick J. Toomey  
United States Senator



M. Michael Rounds  
United States Senator



Thom Tillis  
United States Senator

Cc: The Honorable Eugene Scalia, United States Secretary of Labor