



LARRY HOGAN
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

March 14, 2019

The Honorable Kirstjen Nielsen
Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security
301 7th St. SW #3621
Washington, DC 20401

The Honorable Alexander Acosta
Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Secretary Nielsen and Secretary Acosta:

In support of Maryland's seafood industry and other seasonal employers, I request that you take immediate action to increase the number of H-2B Nonimmigrant Temporary Worker Program visas to 69,320, as authorized by Congress in the Consolidated Appropriations Act and signed into law by President Trump on Feb. 15, 2019. These workers are vital to rural Maryland and in particular our Eastern Shore.

Crab harvest season starts on April 1. In a typical year, 500 H-2B seasonal workers are needed for Maryland's 20 licensed crab picking houses. Without these temporary workers, and without an end to the arbitrary lottery system, I have been advised by companies and processors that there will be a repeat of last year, in which half of the processors in the state were unable to open for business or forced to significantly reduce their operations. A second year of hardship could permanently damage Maryland's seafood industry, causing these iconic family businesses to close and having a devastating impact on jobs in our state - particularly in this region that already experiences higher unemployment rates than the rest of the state.

Research conducted by the University of Maryland indicates that every H-2B temporary worker in crab processing helps create 2.5 jobs for American citizens. The loss of these jobs and the processors will threaten the livelihoods of commercial crabbers and watermen, and jeopardize our \$355 million seafood industry.

In addition to lifting the cap, I ask that you work with Congress and Maryland's congressional delegation to finally find a long-term solution to this issue.

Thank you for your consideration of this important topic. Should you wish to visit Chesapeake Bay crab processors and learn about their situation directly, Maryland would be glad to host you. Please do not hesitate to contact my Director of Federal Relations Tiffany Waddell at tiffany.waddell@maryland.gov with additional questions.

Sincerely,

Larry Hogan
Governor

CC:

Senator Benjamin L. Cardin

Senator Chris Van Hollen

Majority Leader Steny Hoyer

Representative C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger

Representative Andy Harris

Representative John Sarbanes

Representative Anthony Brown

Representative David Trone

Representative Elijah Cummings

Representative Jamie Raskin