



LARRY HOGAN
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

January 21, 2020

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

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

Dear Secretary Wolf and Secretary Scalia:

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 - now capped at 66,000 - to the maximum allowable under federal law. These workers are vital to rural Maryland and in particular our Eastern Shore. In addition to lifting the cap, I ask that you partner with Congress and Maryland's congressional delegation to finally find a long-term solution to this issue.

Maryland's blue crab harvest season starts on April 1, 2020. 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, local seafood processors will be unable to open for business or be forced to significantly reduce their operations. Another year of hardship could permanently damage Maryland's sustainable seafood industry, causing these iconic family and small businesses to close or constrict, which would have a devastating impact on commerce and jobs, particularly in economically disadvantaged areas of the state.

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

Thank you for your consideration of this urgent issue. Should you wish to visit a Chesapeake Bay crab house or processor to learn about the situation directly, the State of 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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Larry Hogan".

Larry Hogan
Governor

cc: Senator Ben 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 Jamie Raskin