



LARRY HOGAN
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

February 15, 2022

The Honorable Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senate
509 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Christopher Van Hollen
United States Senate
110 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Steny H. Hoyer
Majority Leader
H-107, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger
United States House of Representatives
2206 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Sarbanes
United States House of Representatives
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Andy Harris, M.D.
United States House of Representatives
2334 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Anthony Brown
United States House of Representatives
1323 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jamie Raskin
United States House of Representatives
412 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Trone
United States House of Representatives
1213 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kweisi Mfume
United States House of Representatives
2163 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Members of the Maryland Congressional Delegation:

Current labor shortages across the country and here in Maryland continue to have a tremendous impact on our seafood production businesses. I recently signed a bipartisan letter to President Biden with fellow governors across the country urging him to increase the number of temporary workers allowed through the H-2B seasonal visa program. As you know, these temporary workers have long represented an important and valued part of our workforce, but they are even more critical now given the acute labor shortages and the critical role the seafood industry plays in many Maryland communities, especially those on the Eastern Shore.

As things stand today, only a single crab processing facility in Maryland is slated to receive much-needed H-2B workers for the 2022 season. If left unchecked, this will deal a devastating, potentially fatal blow to

an industry and way of life that is woven deep into the fabric of our great state. The crab processing companies that have not received workers—again, which includes all but one—will not be able to operate this season. Many will be forced to close their businesses and lay off year-round workers—temporarily or even permanently—if their H-2B worker requests are not fulfilled.

Maryland's Best Seafood, a marketing program within the Maryland Department of Agriculture, recently conducted a survey measuring the economic impact of the state's crab industry and the importance of the federal H-2B temporary visa program. The new study provides updated research that quantifies the impacts that a lack of H-2B workers would have on Maryland's crab industry, economy, and jobs.

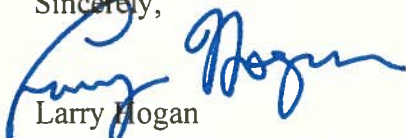
The results of the updated study include the following:

- In 2021, responding crab meat processors purchased 16.1 million pounds of live crabs, valued at \$32.4 million.
- Securing seasonal labor for crab picking is expected to be more challenging than ever in 2022. The industry only expects to receive 10% of the workforce needed.
- Such a reduction in H-2B workers is expected to cut Maryland jobs by 940 to 1,397 and cost Maryland's economy about \$141 million. These are American jobs that will be affected all along the seafood supply chain, from restaurants to watermen.
- In 2022, if they are able to get the seasonal labor they need, survey respondents expect to spend \$20.3 million on payroll; \$3.9 million on equipment, vehicles, etc.; \$4.3 million on packaging, boxes, and other supplies; and \$3.5 million on repairs and maintenance with local vendors.
- Nine out of 10 companies say that seasonal labor availability is a challenge that threatens the survival of Maryland's seafood business.

Maryland's seafood industry is part of what makes us known around the nation and the world. We cannot—and I will not—let these hardworking Maryland businesses fail on our watch. I ask that you partner with your colleagues and the administration to find a long-term and more permanent solution to this critical workforce issue, such as an exemption from the annual H-2B visa cap, as is done for fish roe processors, to protect the viability of Maryland's crab processing industry and those who rely on it economically.

Thank you again for your leadership. Your continued support of the Maryland seafood industry is essential to keeping our Maryland small businesses in operation. For more information, please contact Ariel Judah, director of federal relations, at (202) 624-1472 or ariel.judah@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,



Larry Hogan
Governor