

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Pekoske
Acting Secretary of Homeland Security
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
2201 C St., NW
Washington, DC 20520

January 29, 2021

Dear Secretary Blinken and Acting Secretary Pekoske:

We write today to highlight the important role H-2A guestworkers play in the agricultural supply chain. Due to ongoing workforce shortages, American farmers use the H-2A guestworker visa program to fill vacant farm positions. The most recent available data indicates that approximately 5,000 of these valued essential workers originate from South Africa.

We appreciate the Administration's continued efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, but we ask that supply chain impacts remain top of mind during these discussions. Without an exemption to the recently imposed travel restrictions, South African H-2A worker absences would have limited the ability of American farms to continue production of food, fuel, and fiber for our nation. We thank you for your flexibility and efforts to provide an exemption for South African H-2A workers in light of national interest.

That being said, we request that H-2A workers coming to the United States will be provided similar considerations as appropriate and continue to be exempted from any future travel restrictions. We also request that the State Department review current policies and procedures to ensure that the processing of these visas is not delayed due to COVID-19 related U.S. embassy or consulate closures. American farmers stand ready to implement additional COVID-19 safety protocols in the interest of maintaining worker safety and the continuity of production vital to our national food security interests.

While protecting our nation from new strains of COVID-19 is critically important, it is in our national interest to ensure the continued production of food, fuel, and fiber. We look forward to working together to protect workers and the national food supply chain.

Sincerely,



Frank D. Lucas
Member of Congress



Rick Crawford
Member of Congress



Henry Cuellar
Member of Congress



Austin Scott
Member of Congress



Kelly Armstrong
Member of Congress



James R. Barid
Member of Congress



Steven M. Palazzo
Member of Congress



Patrick McHenry
Member of Congress



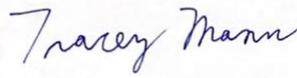
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Dan Newhouse
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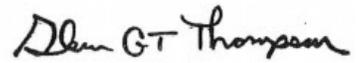
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