

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 25, 2020

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

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf:

We write on behalf of local seafood businesses in Virginia, Alaska, Maryland, and North Carolina who need the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to release additional H-2B visas in order to hire seasonal workers and continue operations. We were encouraged to hear that you have been working diligently on this issue when we spoke with you last week.

Many of the seafood businesses we represent are family-owned operations that go back multiple generations, often in rural areas of our states. Despite good faith efforts to find local seasonal workers, our seafood industries rely on H-2B workers for tough jobs such as shucking oysters and processing crabs. These businesses are entirely reliant on the forces of nature that determine, for example, when salmon will run and be ready for harvest. Without H-2B visas, some local businesses will be forced to reduce the size of their American workforces.

Under the "Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020", the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Secretary of the Department of Labor (DOL), is authorized to provide expeditious H-2B cap relief for our local businesses' upcoming seasonal labor needs. We urge the Department to promptly make available sufficient visas to meet the labor needs of our states' seafood industries, and to announce its intent to do so by March 1, 2020.

Local seafood businesses earn their livelihoods based on perishable products, and need H-2B workers to harvest and process their respective seafood products so they can sell those products. If these local businesses lose a customer base one year, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to come back into the industry. We have already heard from local businesses that will be forced to shut down ahead of the 2020 season if a sufficient number of Congressionally-authorized H-2B visas are not released.

Without answers on H-2B visa cap relief for 2020, our seafood industries remain in a unique and perilous position. We urge you to quickly announce your intent to make available sufficient H-2B visas authorized as Congress. Thank you for your careful attention to this critical matter.

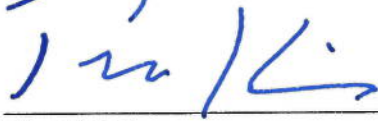
Sincerely,



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



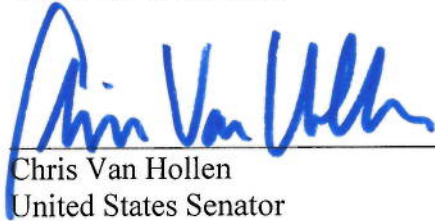
Dan Sullivan
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Thom Tillis
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator