

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 27, 2017

The Honorable John F. Kelly
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Kelly:

We write to express our concerns regarding recent media reports that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) plans to make available only a limited number of additional H-2B Nonimmigrant Temporary Worker visas above the existing cap in Fiscal Year 2017.

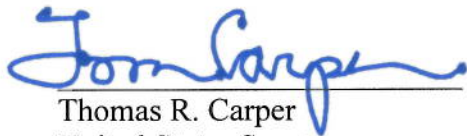
As you know, the Omnibus Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2017 signed into law in early May provided the Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Secretary of Labor, with the authority to approve nearly double the existing cap of 66,000 H-2B visas. Many of us wrote to you following the passage of that bill to urge you to lift the cap. We applaud the announcement last week by DHS that you have decided to lift the cap on visas available to seasonal workers this summer. This important step will help businesses hire the workers they need during the summer.

However, we are concerned by reports that the number of additional H-2B visas approved will be far lower than the number authorized by Congress, and may be as low as 18,500. We are also concerned that the timeline for approving H-2B applications would hinder businesses' ability to hire the employees they need and leave them without help until late in the summer season. According to DHS, these visas likely will not be approved until late July at the earliest — meaning that applications are not likely to be through the multi-agency approval process until mid-August.

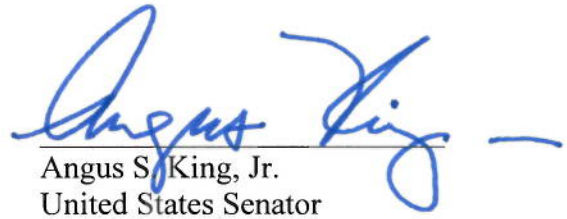
Businesses in our states, particularly in our tourism industries, rely on the H-2B visa program to hire extra workers in the summer tourism season, when demand is greatest. The delay in approving additional visas during much of the peak season could hurt local employers' ability to keep their businesses going and meet demand. We respectfully urge you to use the authority provided by Congress to increase the number of H-2B visas available to seasonal workers, and to work with the Department of Labor to ensure that visas are available as soon as possible.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent issue. We ask that you act as soon as possible to address these concerns.

Sincerely yours,



Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



John Thune
United States Senator

cc: The Honorable R. Alexander Acosta, Secretary
United States Department of Labor