

February 1, 2018

The following agriculture organizations collectively represent nearly every ag sector of the industry that is dependent on access to a federal guest worker program to provide some or most of their workforce. Over the years, each of us has communicated with you and/or your staff stressing the importance of a viable guestworker program. **Working together, we are reaching out to you seeking assistance to deliver a reasonable, cost-effective, viable visa workforce program to support the many diverse farm operations and the rural communities served by their economic sustainability.**

Year after year, the domestic workforce refuses to accept labor-intensive jobs in numerous agriculture and forestry sectors, despite increased wages and employee benefit packages. This has long been a challenge for agriculture, but with the current low unemployment rate, these challenges have grown exponentially. We need your help.

As negotiations continue to craft immigration reform legislation to address the DACA issue, we see a path forward with the workforce objectives captured in the "Agricultural Guestworker Act of 2017" (AG Act). As you know, this bill would create a new federal H-2C guestworker program managed by USDA and we are optimistic it could further develop to serve the workforce needs of our industry in the future. The AG Act recently passed the House Judiciary Committee and would reduce paperwork and make the program more efficient and economical for farms and ag industry businesses of all sizes. While it is no silver bullet, it contains numerous key elements lacking in the current H-2A guestworker program. **Many reforms in the AG Act will assist with the current agriculture labor shortages, add new jobs for domestic workers, and spur economic growth critical to rural communities.**

This is a chance, perhaps the only chance, to deliver meaningful changes for a guestworker program that will keep agriculture sustainable in Georgia and across the U.S. **We need your assistance to have this legislation combined with other immigration reform measures currently being debated in Congress.**

Meaningful immigration and security reforms should also include these critical program advancements to provide a legal agricultural workforce now and in the future. We stand ready to assist in this effort. Georgia's \$75 billion agricultural industry and the strength of our rural communities are counting on you.

Sincerely,

