

AFL-CIO

LEGISLATIVE ALERT

July 14, 2020

Dear Appropriations Committee Member:

The AFL-CIO strongly urges you to oppose any appropriations amendments that would expand the abuse-riddled H-2A or H-2B visa programs. As our nation confronts multiple crises with no end in sight, it is unnecessary and inappropriate to expand programs that increase already considerable risks to the lives and livelihoods of working people.

Unions have long pushed to restructure our system of work visas so they can be used only in cases of real and demonstrated need, and so that all those who work in affected industries are assured full rights, fair pay and equal treatment. The need for reforms to ensure employer accountability and effective protection of migrant and U.S. workers only grows more apparent and urgent amidst the heightened threats of the pandemic. Unfortunately, industries have consistently sought to block any efforts to enact reasonable program oversight and safeguards.

H-2 workers are extremely vulnerable to abuse due to the structure of the seasonal visas. These programs allow people to work long hours for low pay, but not to change employers, exercise their rights or truly integrate into our society. Alarming levels of abuse, including forced labor, wage theft, sexual harassment, egregious discrimination and visa fraud, have been the foreseeable result. Now we must add to these longstanding threats the very real and documented risk of exposure to COVID-19 due to a complete lack of regulatory measures to ensure worker safety.

Now more than ever we must insist on strong protections and rights for all workers, regardless of immigration status. At a time of profound hardship for everyone in our country's workforce, we urge you to oppose any harmful amendments on the appropriations bills this week and reject efforts to expand exploitative visa programs without long overdue reforms.

Sincerely,



William Samuel, Director
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American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations

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