

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 6, 2024

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
2433 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leader Schumer, Speaker Johnson, Leader McConnell and Leader Jeffries:

We write to share our concerns about the annual adjustment to the Farm Labor Survey (FLS) Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR). On January 1, 2024, new FLS AEWRs went into effect, placing further strain on farmers and ranchers already struggling with elevated input costs. The H-2A community anticipates increases to the Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) AEWR later in the year as well. We urge you to include an AEWR freeze in the earliest possible legislative vehicle.

The increasing cost of labor for agriculture producers is unsustainable. According to the American Farm Bureau Federation, the national average AEWR will be \$17.55 this year. That represents an increase of 5.6 percent from 2023, the third year in a row the AEWR increased by over five percent. In fact, the national average AEWR has more than doubled since 2005. This is compounded by the increased costs of inputs like energy and fertilizer, other guest worker expenses such as housing and transportation, and forthcoming expenses imposed by new regulations and fees.

If costs continue to increase as they have, the pressure put on America's food producers will fundamentally shift the food production model that has allowed us to be agriculturally independent and secure. The United States already imports much of our fruit and produce, as operating costs and competition from abroad have driven out many domestic producers. If we continue with these unsustainable policies, we are not only damaging our country's longstanding agricultural heritage, but also threatening our domestic food supply.

We have heard from constituents who will be forced to make tough decisions about which crops they will be able to afford to hire enough labor to harvest this year. Others, including small and family run operations, will be unable to afford the added labor costs and forced to shutter operations altogether. In order to support our farmers and ranchers and feed families across the country, we must act now.

We request that the earliest possible vehicle freezes the H-2A wage rates at January 2023 levels.
Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Mike Crapo
United States Senator



Kevin Cramer
United States Senator



Pete Ricketts
United States Senator



Tim Scott
United States Senator



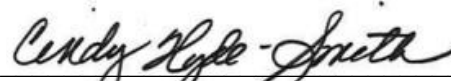
Roger Marshall, M.D.
United States Senator



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator



Mike Braun
United States Senator



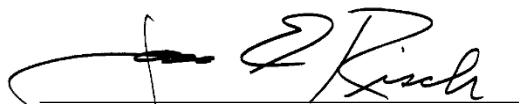
Cindy Hyde-Smith
United States Senator




Thom Tillis
United States Senator



Rick Scott
United States Senator



James E. Risch
United States Senator



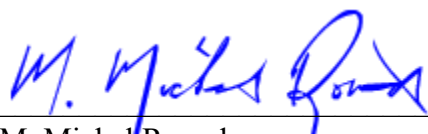
Jerry Moran
United States Senator



Todd Young
United States Senator



Ted Budd
United States Senator



M. Michal Rounds
United States Senator



John Hoeven
United States Senator