



October 25, 2019

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Immigration and Citizenship
House Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Dan Newhouse
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support for the Farm Workforce Modernization Act

Dear Chairwoman Lofgren and Congressman Newhouse,

The Farm Workforce Modernization Act (FWMA) is a crucial step forward towards solving agriculture's need for labor. NASDA thanks you for your hard work negotiating and finding compromises on a bipartisan bill that will successfully increase access to farm labor across the country. Foreign-born workers are an essential part of the U.S. agriculture workforce and an estimated half of U.S. farm workers are currently foreign born.¹ For years, the agriculture industry has struggled to access sufficient labor in sectors ranging from produce to animal handling. This is only compounded by the current low unemployment in the United States. These factors are why the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture urges Congress to pass the FWMA.

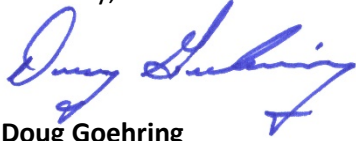
NASDA represents the Commissioners, Secretaries, and Directors of the state departments of agriculture in all fifty states and four U.S. territories. NASDA members represent all agriculture in their states and finding practical solutions for the agriculture labor shortage is a top priority for NASDA members.

Agriculture labor reform is crucial for ensuring that U.S. farmers and ranchers have a reliable and skilled workforce. This bill will, for the first time, make year-round visas available. This is crucial for the dairy industry and other industries that rely on temporary labor. Further, NASDA supports the bill maintaining the H-2A program while also creating a new, certified agricultural worker status. This status and its renewable visas will increase certainty for farmers, ranchers and the farm workers who we rely upon for the safe harvesting and handling of crops and livestock.

¹ https://www.fb.org/files/AFBF_LaborStudy_Feb2014.pdf

NASDA acknowledges that a multi-faceted effort is needed to fix the challenges with agriculture labor, so any progress made on this front is a step in the right direction. We look forward to advancing solutions to agriculture's labor shortage with Congress.

Sincerely,



Doug Goehring
NASDA President
North Dakota Agriculture Commissioner