

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 11, 2024

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-128 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Susan Collins
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-128 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwomen and Ranking Members,

We write with shared concerns regarding the annual adjustment to the Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR). Now in 2024, the H-2A labor rates paid by agricultural employers have become more unaffordable. The new rates put further financial strain on farm operations of all sizes, and we urge you to include an H-2A wage freeze in upcoming funding legislation.

The national average AEWR has already more than doubled over the past two decades, making agricultural guest labor unaffordable for farm employers and resulting in higher consumer costs. According to the American Farm Bureau Federation, the national average AEWR will be around \$17.55, which is upwards of a mean 5 percent increase over 2023. While the AEWR varies by region, nearly half of all states are projected to have an AEWR between \$17 and \$19 per hour in 2024. Meanwhile, producers in Canada pay closer to \$11 per hour for fieldworkers, or even approximately \$1.50 per hour in Mexico. This uneven playing field greatly disadvantages our domestic producers.

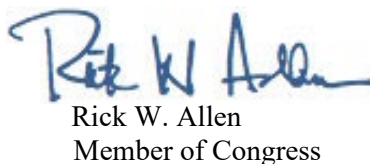
For farmers and ranchers who use H-2A, the skyrocketing AEWR will only compound inflated input costs like energy and fertilizer, other guest worker expenses like transportation and housing, and burdens from several impending federal regulations and fees. USDA data shows that hired farm labor costs account for nearly 15 percent of total cash expenses. More labor-intensive industries will be hardest-hit, including specialty crop growers, who already spend nearly 40 percent of their total cash expenses on labor alone. If we do nothing, many of our constituents will be forced shutter their businesses, despite good-faith efforts to ensure our national food security and feed families across our nation.

While more permanent solutions are needed to address the AEWR's past impact and its future trajectory, we request that an upcoming government funding vehicle prohibit funds from being used to implement a wage increase or otherwise freeze the H-2A wage rates at January 2023 levels. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



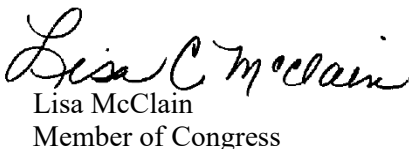
Bill Huizenga
Member of Congress



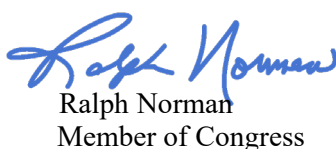
Rick W. Allen
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Maria Elvira Salazar
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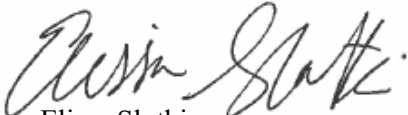
Lisa McClain
Member of Congress

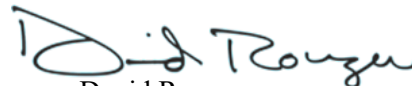


Ralph Norman
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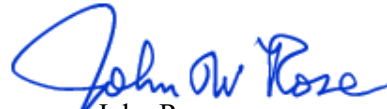
Kim Schrier, M.D.
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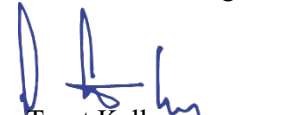

Elissa Slotkin
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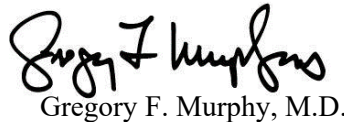

Austin Scott
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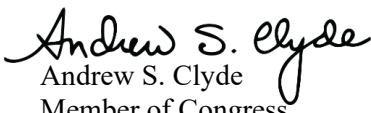

John Rose
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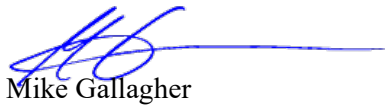

Gregory F. Murphy, M.D.
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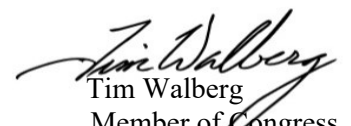

Andrew S. Clyde
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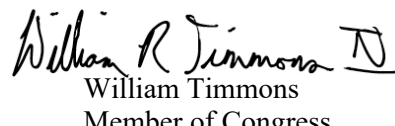

Byron L. Donalds
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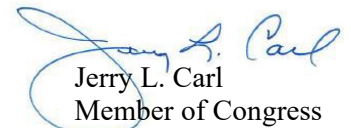

Mike Gallagher
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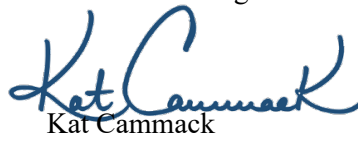

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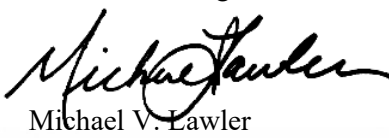

Marie Gluesenkamp Perez
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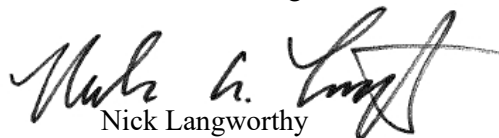

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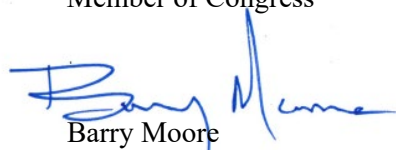

Eric Houcin
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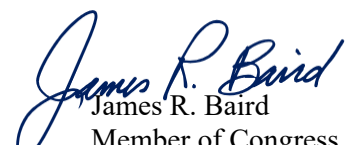

John Duarte
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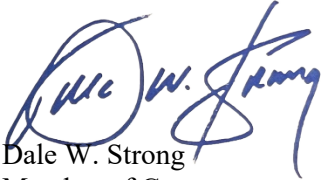

Larry Bucshon, M.D.
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Lori Chavez-DeRemer
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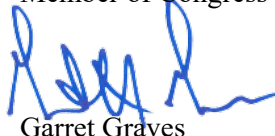
Doug LaMalfa
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Bruce Westerman
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Pete Sessions
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Garret Graves
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Andy Barr
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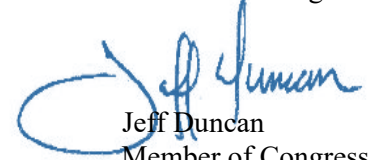
Darin LaHood
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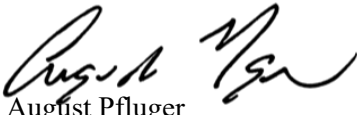
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Jeff Duncan
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August Pfluger
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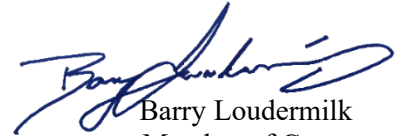
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Frank D. Lucas
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Barry Loudermilk
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Jim Banks
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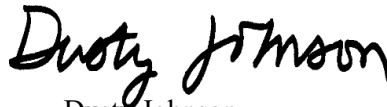
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Mary Miller
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Dusty Johnson
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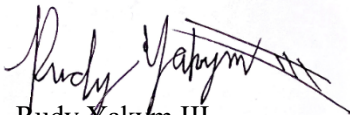
Clay Higgins
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Kelly Armstrong
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Brett Guthrie
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Rudy Yakym III
Member of Congress



Joe Wilson
Member of Congress



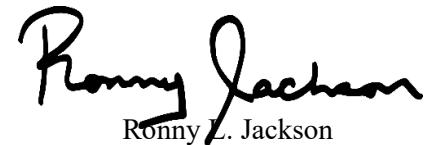
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Mike Kelly
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Claudia Tenney
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Ronny L. Jackson
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John James
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