

February 12, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi,

On behalf of the members of the Essential Workers Immigration Coalition (EWIC), we are writing to express our grave concerns with the provisions contained in the administration's immigration reform proposals, the Senate Secure and Succeed Act of 2018 and in *H.R. 4760 Securing America's Future Act (SAFA)* that would decrease the overall number of legal visas issued each year in the United States.

For almost two decades, the members of EWIC have strongly urged Congress and multiple administrations to work towards the improvement of U.S. immigration policy. We agree that the current U.S. system is broken, and we also recognize and support the efforts of lawmakers to ensure a strong and safe national border and more effective workplace enforcement system. We have supported expanding E-Verify to all employers through the *Legal Workforce Act (LWA)* for many years. EWIC members recognize the importance of employment authorization and verification and hope that the LWA will remain the basis of any effort to move forward with mandatory, nationwide employment verification requirements.

We continue to strongly believe that one of the most important undertakings of any reform to U.S. immigration policy should be the improvement of the legal visa programs/systems in the U.S., and the creation of a system that more appropriately recognizes the needs of marketplace and economy when determining which workers should be granted entry into the country. There is currently no process by which lesser skilled essential workers can immigrate legally other than a guest worker in a seasonal or temporary period position. Our American born workforce will simply not increase enough to fill the jobs we expect to be created by a vibrant economy in the coming years.

EWIC members represent industries that come predominantly from sectors of the U.S. economy where outsourcing and offshoring work is simply not possible. We are fully-reliant on a U.S.-based workforce, and one that is willing to work in industries whose jobs often include significant manual labor and challenging conditions. From nursing, to construction, to the service industries, meat processing, and landscaping, our industries all require a stable and reliable workforce of hard-working people to help us expand and grow the economy, which in turn helps us to create even more jobs for U.S. workers.

Each of our industries is experiencing significant labor shortages across the United States and in some industries this problem has reached crisis proportions. This has been the case for some time, with demographic changes, the aging of the workforce, skills gaps, and low unemployment rates meaning that our industries face real challenges finding enough workers. We continue to work aggressively to increase job training opportunities for U.S. workers and develop new recruiting efforts to entice more workers to join us to fill the many job openings that are currently going unfilled.

The administration proposal, the Secure and Succeed Act of 2018 introduced by Senators Grassley, Lankford, Ernst, Cotton, Cornyn, Tillis, and Perdue and H.R. 4760 address key immigration issues, but they fall short when it comes to the real economic needs of business and of the country. Given the workforce needs of our members, we strongly oppose the provisions in H.R. 4760 and other proposals that would ultimately eliminate a significant number of available legal visas for those seeking to enter the United States to work, thus resulting in a 25% decrease in overall immigration levels. We do not disagree that serious consideration must be given to how our nation prioritizes the issuance of visas, but we do disagree that a re-prioritization should lead to an overall cut in available immigration visas at a time when we know the economy needs more workers across a broad spectrum of industries. We strongly urge lawmakers to acknowledge the help that our industries have been asking for over the past two decades by maintaining current visa levels and re-issuing them via a program that can help address the serious and real workforce shortages in our EWIC-member industries.

Finally, we want to acknowledge the efforts made by Chairman Goodlatte and the House Judiciary Committee, contained in H.R. 4760, that acknowledge the need to improve the program designed to provide legal workers for the agriculture industry. While we understand that many specifics are still subject to refinement after ongoing discussion with industry, we believe that some of these provisions could also be utilized in the creation of a legal visa program directed at the unserved portion of the U.S. economy represented by the members of EWIC.

We look forward to continuing to work with you as Congress addresses the very important issue of reforming and improving the nation's immigration laws. And we hope that you will give

strong consideration to our concerns and views as our industries continue to struggle with the workforce and demographic realities which require us to look to foreign-born labor to supplement our U.S. workforce.

Sincerely,

Essential Worker Immigration Coalition (EWIC)

cc: Members of the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee

Members of the U.S. House of Representatives Judiciary Committee

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