

NORTHERN MICHIGAN CHAMBER
ALLIANCE

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BY EXEC SEC
2018 JUN 15 AM 7:12

June 5, 2018

The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen
Secretary of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane SW
Washington, DC 20528-0075

RE: Gratitude for 15,000 H2-B Visa Increase

Dear Secretary Nielsen,

I am writing on behalf of the Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance to thank you for your 15,000 increase of H-2B guest worker visas, and to urge you to take further action by expanding the program even more.

As you may know, small, seasonal businesses are the heart of the northern Michigan economy, and in many cases they depend on temporary workforce for six month or less per year. These workers fill jobs in agriculture, landscaping, hospitality, forestry, and many other seasonal industries. Specifically, hotels, restaurants, and landscaping businesses are some of the most profoundly impacted by this labor shortage in the region. For example, Litzenburger Landscape located in Harbor Springs, MI had to close their doors last summer after 31 years in business due to a lack of labor. We hear similar stories from across northern Michigan each year.

With the H-2B program's arbitrary annual cap of 66,000 visas, it is easy to see why businesses are struggling. There are simply not enough visas to satisfy the prolific economic growth in the United States. Moreover, the severe workforce shortage in northern Michigan adds further pressure and stifles these businesses. Without relief, these establishments will continue to struggle to meet customer demands and, in some cases, fail.

While we acknowledge and congratulate your efforts so far, a 15,000 increase is simply not enough. Nor is the increase permanent as we will be back to 66,000 visas come October 1st. While we agree that Congress should take strong action to expand the program, we strongly urge you to use your authority granted in the 2018 Omnibus to further increase the cap on H2-B visas permanently to allow businesses in northern Michigan and around the country to flourish.

We are grateful for your advocacy of this issue, and hope you will consider the needs of rural parts of the country like northern Michigan in your future policy decisions. Feel free to contact me at (231) 995-7109 or kentw@tcchamber.org if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

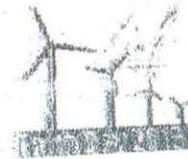
Kent Wood
Director of Government Relations



202 E. Grandview Parkway
Traverse City, MI 49684

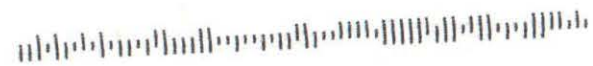
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The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen
Secretary of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane SW
Washington, DC 20528-0075

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**U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services**

August 27, 2018

Mr. Kent Wood
Director of Government Relations
Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance
Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce
202 E. Grandview Parkway
Traverse City, Michigan 49684

Dear Mr. Wood:

Thank you for your April 11, 2018 letter. Secretary Nielsen asked that I respond on her behalf.

Your letter urges Secretary Nielsen and Secretary Acosta to approve additional H-2B petitions pursuant to the H-2B visa provisions contained in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 (Public Law 115-141), which was signed by the President on March 23, 2018.

This provision authorized Secretary Nielsen, in consultation with Secretary Acosta, to determine whether to increase, and if so, by how many (within specified parameters), the number of available H-2B visas for fiscal year (FY) 2018. In making her decision to increase the number of H-2B visas, the Secretary carefully weighed several factors, including whether U.S. workers may be harmed by any such increase.

On May 31, 2018, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and U.S. Department of Labor published a temporary final rule increasing the cap on H-2B nonimmigrant visas by up to 15,000 additional visas through the end of FY 2018. The Secretary does not intend to reopen the supplemental cap for FY 2018.

As with the essentially identical provision in the FY 2017 Omnibus, DHS did not ask for, and does not believe it is appropriate to have, the discretion to authorize the issuance of additional H-2B visas, in general, and specifically under a supplemental cap. I share Secretary Nielsen's opinion that Members of Congress have the best information to know the correct number of H-2B visas needed to support American businesses without harming American workers because congressional representatives have the best understanding of their constituencies and the needs of their local employers.

Further, I share the Secretary's desire to work together with Congress to find solutions to most effectively allocate available H-2B visas throughout the year, while also protecting U.S. workers in the process. DHS will be submitting a congressionally mandated report that details options for addressing the issue of late-season filers in the H-2B program, resulting in their inability to obtain H-2B workers. This report will include suggestions on how the program

can better serve our national interest. In the meantime, DHS continues to take steps of its own in this regard, including advising members of the public who may have information about a participating employer who is abusing the H-2B program on how to file a report through ReportH2BAbuse@uscis.dhs.gov.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. Please share this response with the cosigners of your letter. Should you wish to discuss these matters further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. Francis Cissna". The signature is stylized with a large "L", a dot over the "F", and a flourish at the end.

L. Francis Cissna
Director