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March 20, 2007

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Dear Ms. DeRocco:

I am writing to urge the Department of Labor to take immediate steps to process the growing backlog of temporary labor certifications for summer H2B workers within the next five business days.

As you know, temporary summer workers are essential to the economy of coastal resort areas in New England. In my district, which includes Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, approximately 5,000 workers from abroad come to my district each summer to work in the lodging, restaurant, landscaping and construction industries. In previous seasons, the lack of an adequate seasonal labor force has forced some businesses to close and created a host of other problems that affect the competitiveness of tourism in New England.

It is estimated that the "cap" on H2B visas is imminent and could be reached within days. Last year, the visas for seasonal workers were exhausted by early April. We have learned from officials at Citizenship and Immigration Services that the volume of H2B applications submitted this year has increased significantly. Therefore, it is not unrealistic to expect the "cap" on visas to be reached within the next ten days.

Our office has been receiving complaints of unacceptable delays in Atlanta over the past six weeks. We have been assured by the managers of the Atlanta processing center that extra staff would be added.

Nevertheless, the backlog continues to build and get worse. Unfortunately, the decision to send some applications to Chicago for processing appears to have occurred too late to have any meaningful impact.

The situation at the present moment is quite serious and needs your immediate attention. Please feel free to call me or Mark Forest, my Chief of Staff, if you have any questions.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,


William Delahunt

Asst. Secretary Emily Stover DeRocco
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