

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
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SUZANNE M. BUMP
SECRETARY OF LABOR AND
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SECRETARY OF HOUSING AND
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April 16, 2008

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Immigration,
Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security,
and International Law
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steve King
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Immigration,
Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security,
and International Law
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Lofgren and Ranking Member King:

Time is running out for small businesses across the country that depend on the H-2B visa program to meet their hiring needs during peak seasons. As leaders in the Massachusetts effort to promote workforce and economic development, we urge Congress to immediately pass a one-year stand alone extension of the H-2B returning worker program.

The 33,000 cap on H-2B visas for seasonal workers for the second half of FY2008 was reached on January 2, 2008, however, the labor needs of seasonal businesses across the country have not been addressed. In the past, the 'returning worker' provision of the H-2B visa program provided much needed flexibility for businesses to meet the additional seasonal labor demands they face. Under this provision, returning H-2B workers were not counted against the numerical limit. Unfortunately, for the first time since 2005, this 'returning worker' provision was not extended.

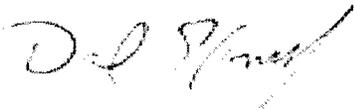
Across the country businesses that depend on H-2B workers are facing a severe shortage headed into the busy summer months. In Massachusetts, the hospitality industry is the third largest employer with over 125,000 in state jobs directly tied to the success of tourism, which generates

\$13.1 billion for the Massachusetts economy and \$833.3 million in state and local revenue. In the absence of a fix for returning workers, we have organized job fairs in areas with higher unemployment and are looking at transportation solutions for these off-site workers. But despite these efforts, the unfortunate reality is that our seasonal workforce demands will remain unmet. Each day Congress fails to act adds to the tremendous uncertainty faced by our seasonal businesses. The economic impact of a further delay on these businesses and our state cannot be over-stated.

While we understand that long-term reform of the H-2B program must be discussed in the context of broad-based comprehensive immigration reform, due to the immediate need for action, we urge you to act to pass a stand alone one-year extension of the H-2B returning worker program. We believe that this approach is the most effective means of securing immediate relief.

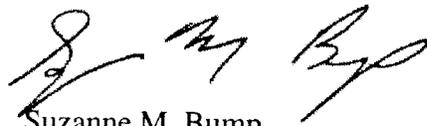
Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Daniel O'Connell

Secretary of Housing and Economic
Development



Suzanne M. Bump

Secretary of Labor and Workforce
Development

cc: Members of Congress