

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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TO THE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce supports the Farm Workforce Modernization Act, which would take important steps to address the growing struggle of agricultural employers to meet their workforce needs.

The inability of American farmers to effectively meet their workforce needs does not affect the agricultural industry in a vacuum. When crops rot in a field because farmers do not have enough workers for the harvest, this does not only harm the interests of that farmer. These situations also negatively affect the shipping company that would have transported those products, and the retailers that would have sold them.

Furthermore, the uncertainty caused by the insufficient quantity of agricultural workers in the U.S. has enabled foreign agricultural producers to take advantage of this situation and gain market share. American agricultural producers will only become less competitive in the global marketplace if these workforce problems persist.

The Farm Workforce Modernization Act seeks to provide workforce stability for agricultural workers by allowing unauthorized farm workers to earn legal status in the U.S. This legislation also would address future agricultural workforce needs by updating the temporary agricultural worker program, most notably providing eligibility to employers who have year-round labor needs, which is critical for dairy and livestock. Furthermore, the bill would enhance domestic security by making the use of E-Verify mandatory for employers seeking to hire temporary agricultural workers.

This bill could benefit from further refinement. The proposed prevailing wage levels for temporary agricultural workers, as well as the new annual visa quotas for year-round agricultural employment, should be more responsive to market needs. In addition, the transition period for agricultural employers to utilize the E-Verify system should be extended in order for employers to better adjust to the new compliance burdens being foisted upon them. We are committed to working with members of both parties to address these and other issues to improve the bill as it proceeds through the legislative process.

Sincerely,



Neil L. Bradley