

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 17, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C., 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

The ongoing coronavirus outbreak has stunned our country and required bold and decisive action from our nation's leaders. Thankfully, President Trump, Vice President Pence, and the Coronavirus Taskforce have stepped up to the challenge and provided relief for Americans while continuing to update the American people on the steps being taken to protect the health and safety of every citizen. As the situation continues, it is imperative that elected and agency officials work together to address the urgent concerns that currently face our country.

We write in concern over inadvertent delays in processing H-2 agricultural guest workers, an issue that has been brought to our attention by farmers across Georgia. Such delays could have a substantial negative impact on the United States' domestic commodity and food supply. Given the ongoing outbreak of coronavirus, Georgians and folks across America are understandably concerned about their ability to continue accessing the food they need. As one of the nation's top agricultural producers, the state of Georgia and its farmers supply food – including poultry, eggs, peanuts, onions, peaches, blueberries, and other fruits and vegetables – to every corner of the United States. In addition to fruits and vegetables, the supply of cotton – an important crop in Georgia – would also be harmed by any H-2 agricultural guest worker program delay. During these trying times, we must focus efforts on ensuring Americans have continued access to the foods and commodities they rely on. This access relies heavily on farmers' abilities to utilize agricultural workers under the H-2 program.

Georgia, like many other states, relies on the seasonal agricultural guest worker visa program to keep our agriculture industry moving and serving the great people of Georgia and the country. The harvesting and planting period for a number of crops in Georgia is set to commence in the coming weeks. If the coronavirus outbreak forces a lapse in the near-term processing of H-2 agricultural guest workers, crops may die in the field, diminishing our domestic supply and potentially increasing our reliance on imports.

It is imperative that we work together to ensure agricultural workers are properly screened and processed so that American farms can plant and harvest their fields this spring. We understand

the ongoing outbreak demands changes to the Department of State's operations, but we believe, with responsible screening, that the agricultural workers program can continue to operate.

We are encouraged by ongoing conversations with the Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security regarding the processing of H-2 applications for returning workers and are hopeful that more H-2 visas can be processed over time. As we have learned, a thriving domestic supply of necessary goods is essential to weathering this global crisis.

We greatly appreciate your agency's efforts on this issue and others arising out of the coronavirus outbreak. With harvesting season around the corner, it is imperative that this issue be addressed to maintain food security across the nation. If there are any changes in the H-2 program, we ask that you reach out to our office so that we may update those affected.

Sincerely,



Doug Collins
Member of Congress



Austin Scott
Member of Congress