

H-2B

WORKFORCE COALITION

Protecting American Workers Through a Stable and Reliable Seasonal Workforce

www.h2bworkforcecoalition.com

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April 20, 2021

Statement on Supplemental H-2B Visas

This morning, the Department of Homeland Security announced that it plans to make 22,000 supplemental H-2B visas available this fiscal year, with 6,000 of these visas set aside for workers from the Northern Triangle countries of Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala. We urge the Department to increase the total number of supplemental visas they intend to issue. Furthermore, we implore DHS to move quickly and make these visas available to seasonal businesses across the country, most of which needed workers as of April 1.

We appreciate this morning's announcement, as it will provide some much-needed relief to businesses that continue to struggle with vacant positions due to the lack of American workers willing to fill these temporary jobs and the program's 66,000 annual visa cap. Seasonal employers utilize the H-2B program as their option of last resort to meet their peak season demands and only after they have met the extensive recruiting requirements and failed to find domestic workers.

Unfortunately, the 22,000 additional visas falls well short of the actual needs of American businesses. During the first three days of 2021, seasonal businesses requested 96,641 H-2B workers. The 33,000 cap for the second half of the fiscal year was reached on February 12. The additional 22,000 visas will help, but roughly 43,000 temporary positions will remain vacant due to the lack of available H-2B visas. The economic harms caused by these workforce issues will be felt not only by H-2B employers, but also the American workers employed by those companies.

Seasonal businesses hope to contribute to our nation's economic recovery, but will not be able to do so if they are not able to operate at full capacity. Today's announcement underscores the need for Congress to address the arbitrary and outdated H-2B cap once and for all. We urge Congress to swiftly pass an H-2B returning worker exemption or other meaningful cap relief.