



January 11, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

In many of our states and territories we are experiencing extraordinarily low unemployment. We're proud of how well our economies are recovering from the economic downturn associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, but the labor shortage is increasingly becoming a serious challenge that threatens the viability of many businesses and ultimately our country's economic recovery.

We recognize there are many causes of the labor shortage, including some that are outside our control. However, that fact only highlights the importance of the policy solutions we *can* control. One such solution is to increase the number of temporary foreign workers coming into the United States under a variety of exchange or worker visas.

Many of these visa programs were curtailed at the beginning of the pandemic as U.S. unemployment rose. As our economy recovers and we learn more about the unique nature of this recovery, any such justifications for limiting worker visas are long since gone, at least in our states and territories.

We understand from conversations with officials in your administration that the primary bottleneck at this stage are vaccine and testing requirements for visa holders, and that to the extent that applicants are being prioritized those visas are going to healthcare workers. Those are valid strategies to protect U.S. healthcare capacity, but we strongly encourage you to expand your focus and prioritize a much broader swath of skill sets.

Our temporary foreign workforce has long represented an important and valued part of our workforce, but they are even more critical now given the acute labor shortages. Some of our states and territories make active use of the J-1 visa program to power our summer and winter tourism industries—vital economic drivers for our states and territories. Others need more J-1 holders to teach in our public schools' language immersion programs. And still others need additional H-2A visa holders for the agricultural industry and temporary H-2B for a wide variety of other industries. These industries are critical in our states and territories, and these businesses are desperate to find workers.

We want to be clear that we make this request even as we do all within our power to create an economic environment conducive to economic growth. We are investing in programs to reskill our workforce for the jobs currently in demand, we're considering various changes to our tax

codes that might make work more attractive, we're supporting impacted businesses, and we're doing everything else possible to reduce barriers to workforce participation.

We're grateful for your administration's recent announcement to add an additional 20,000 H-2B temporary nonagricultural worker visas. We're also supportive of bi-partisan efforts in Congress to repurpose unused visas for doctors and nurses who can help relieve pressure on our healthcare workforce.

Again, we request your help to increase the flow of work-based visas as an additional tool to help address our workforce shortages and the cascading economic consequences of those shortages.

We look forward to your response and to working closely with you and your administration.

Sincerely,



Governor Spencer Cox
State of Utah



Governor Jared Polis
State of Colorado



Governor Leon Guerrero
Territory of Guam



Governor David Ige
State of Hawaii



Governor Janet Mills
State of Maine



Governor Larry Hogan
State of Maryland



Governor Charlie Baker
State of Massachusetts



Governor Phil Scott
State of Vermont