

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 5, 2015

The Honorable Thomas Perez
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Ave, NW
Washington, D.C. 20210

Dear Secretary Perez,

We are writing to request the Department of Labor rescind its recent decision that it will no longer accept private wage surveys (PWS) as a means of determining wages for H-2B visa workers.

Seafood processors along the Gulf coast rely on temporary, seasonal, foreign workers admitted to the U.S. under the H-2B visa program to fill the most labor-intensive positions throughout the sector. The work done by these unskilled laborers is necessary to support thousands of seafood jobs held by U.S. workers. Due to the unique nature of the seafood industry and the rural location of many processors, the seafood business community has historically used PWS to set their wage rate, often relying on state agency-provided wage surveys.

As you know, Gulf Coast fisheries are some of the most productive in the world. In 2010 according to the National Marine Fisheries Service, the commercial fish and shellfish harvest from the five U.S. Gulf states was estimated to be 1.3 billion pounds valued at \$639 million. In fact, the Gulf Coast produces 70 percent of the nation's oysters, 69 percent of domestic shrimp, and is a leading producer of domestic hard- and soft-shell blue crabs.

Since the Department's announcement in December that it will no longer accept PWS, we have heard from seafood employers across the Gulf that this decision has resulted in significantly higher H-2B wage rates, making it impossible for some to open their plants this season, and will likely result in permanent closures of a number of facilities. We believe our national seafood community needs a more localized and appropriate wage determination process, like PWS.

We look forward to working with you to ensure our nation's workers are adequately compensated while preserving our valued seafood community and other small businesses.

Sincerely,



THAD COCHRAN
US SENATOR



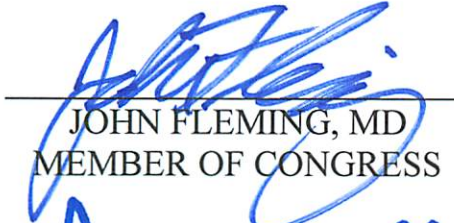
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