

**KATHLEEN C. HOCHUL**  
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November 28, 2011

The Honorable Hilda L. Solis  
Secretary of Labor  
United States Department of Labor  
200 Constitution Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Secretary Solis,

I write to urge you to swiftly modernize the H-2A visa program so Western New York farmers can submit application paperwork to your Department online.

As you know, New York growers and producers are increasingly relying on the H-2A visa program for the seasonal labor they need to plant and harvest their crops. The temporary workers who participate in this program are essential to the continued viability of family farms across our country, and thousands of American jobs and small businesses depend on their arrival each year. I have heard firsthand from farmers who suffered severe economic losses when red tape delayed the approval of their H-2A applications. Tragically, such bureaucracy has led to unharvested crops being left to rot in the fields.

Even when farmers successfully secure the H-2A labor they request, the application process can be onerous. This summer, I was shocked to learn that a farm in Genesee County mailed almost twenty pounds of paperwork to your Department when applying for H-2A visas. In a country as innovative as ours, there must be a better way of administering this program. As our farmers compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy, they expect to have a 21<sup>st</sup> century government that will help, not hinder, their business.

During a meeting with Deputy Secretary Seth Harris this July, I raised the need for your Department to accept online applications for the H-2A program. I am pleased to learn that such efforts are underway. I cannot stress enough how much time, effort and money an electronic application system could save for both our farmers and the federal government, and I urge you to move forward with this initiative expeditiously. Furthermore, I ask that you please provide a timeline for the implementation of this program and further guidance as to how New York farmers can participate in it.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. America's farms are the best in the world, and I look forward working with you to ensure that our farmers have all the support they need to continue to compete, succeed and prosper.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kathleen C. Hochul". The signature is written in a cursive style with a blue ink color.

Kathleen C. Hochul  
Member of Congress