Dear Senator:

We represent faith, business, law enforcement, civic, and national security interests who favor bipartisan immigration reform. We are increasingly concerned not only about the situation at the border, but also the uncertainty faced by immigrant workers and Dreamers, as well as the businesses who depend on them. For too long, Congress has failed to address immigration issues and allowed long-standing problems in a dysfunctional system to persist. With the U.S. House of Representatives recently passing legislation to address the situation of Dreamers, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders, and the agricultural workforce, we urge the Senate to follow suit.

We encourage the Senate to build on this momentum and adopt a bipartisan approach to ensure that these efforts result in a bill that can be signed into law. However, the work does not stop there. We encourage Congress to enact bipartisan, practical solutions and address other elements of the immigration system.

We believe the Republican support for H.R. 1603, the Farm Workforce Modernization Act, shows the impact of bipartisan cooperation on immigration. H.R. 1603 had several co-sponsors from both parties and was the product of bipartisan negotiations that considered the views of members of both parties and key stakeholders – Democrats and Republicans, labor and growers/producers. We believe that if the Senate utilizes this type of bipartisan approach in the coming weeks and months, we will succeed in gaining the votes needed to enact meaningful immigration reforms impacting Dreamers, TPS holders and agricultural workers.

Republicans and Democrats agree on the need to modernize the existing H-2A temporary agricultural worker visa program and allow current unauthorized agricultural workers to earn legal status. Farmworker shortages have hurt producers and consumers, while leading to as much as $3 billion dollars in missed GDP growth.

They also agree on the need to provide Dreamers with the opportunity to obtain permanent legal status. Moreover, significant support exists for solutions that would provide more certainty to long-term recipients of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) in a manner that includes reforms to the program. DACA and TPS holders are estimated to have contributed $17.4 billion in federal taxes and $9.7 billion in state and local taxes and to have $75.4 billion in spending power. And we were pleased to see bipartisan support for the American Dream and Promise Act in the House.

The Senate has the opportunity to provide solutions on immigration issues that will benefit the American people. The Dream Act (S. 264), recently reintroduced by Senators Durbin and Graham, is one example of a bill with bipartisan backing that both parties should support. Similarly, Senators Crapo and Bennet have stated that they will work together on companion legislation to H.R. 1603 that will address the needs of both the agricultural industry and farmworkers. These developments are encouraging and represent a potential starting point for Senate action. We ask that Senate leaders from both parties work constructively to pass bipartisan immigration legislation, like these proposals.
We urge Congress to forge bipartisan compromise on these immigration issues that have wide support. This would be an important first step toward reforming the immigration system, but more work remains to be done. Ultimately, Congress must also address the situation of the broader population of undocumented immigrants, long overdue reforms to the legal visa system, and border security. Were Congress to move forward on reforms with wide support first – like those related to Dreamers, TPS holders, and the farm workforce – that approach would be a step in the right direction. Progress on those issues would not diminish the need or support for additional reforms and even could help build support for further legislative action.

Our immigration system continues to face challenges at the border and in our communities. We urge the Senate to move forward expeditiously, adopting an inclusive process, to obtain bipartisan results that will begin to alleviate these challenges. We look forward to working with you to pass legislation that creates a permanent solution for the Dreamers, addresses the needs of the farm workforce, and provides greater certainty for TPS holders.

Sincerely,
AmericanHort
Essential Worker Immigration Coalition
Migration and Refugee Services, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
National Association of Evangelicals
National Immigration Forum
New American Economy
Niskanen Center
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
World Relief