December 16, 2011

Secretary Hilda Solis
Department of Labor
200 Constitution Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Secretary Solis:

We are writing to express our opposition to the Department of Labor’s proposal to make it more difficult for farmers and ranchers to hire youth to work in agriculture (RIN 1235-AA06). As written, these regulations would be overly burdensome to agriculture producers and would punish an industry that has made significant gains in the safety of its younger workers over the last several decades. The safety of all workers is of utmost importance, but these regulations are harmful to the way agriculture has been practiced in the United States for generations.

Training the next generation of farmers and ranchers is necessary to ensuring a stable food supply for our nation. If we do not encourage participation in agriculture from an early age, we will have fewer and fewer young people staying to work on farms and ranches. This proposal would also be detrimental to young Americans who want to participate in FFA and 4-H programs, getting hands-on experience in agriculture.

Additionally, the way in which the regulation is currently written changes the traditional definition of a family farm. We are seriously concerned that the family farm exemption included in the regulation will not apply to the many family farms that are partly owned by a grandparent, aunt, or uncle. Despite the Department’s claim that the rule will not be interpreted to exclude arrangements in which multiple family members own shares in an agricultural operation, the wording of the proposal will leave this administration or future administrations the ability to exclude many family farms from the exemption to this proposal. For tax and estate purposes, family farms and ranches use a variety of legal structures in order to remain financially viable. These arrangements do not change the fact that they are a family farm by any reasonable definition.

We have heard from many of our constituents expressing their opposition to this proposal, and are seriously concerned with the effect this would have on American agriculture. The Department of Labor must not hinder the ability of America’s farmers and ranchers to supply food for our nation and provide jobs during this difficult economic climate.
Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Rep. Denny Rehberg  
Member of Congress

Rep. Robert Aderholt  
Member of Congress

Rep. Rodney Alexander  
Member of Congress

Rep. Mark E. Amodei  
Member of Congress

Rep. Michele Bachmann  
Member of Congress

Rep. Spencer Bachus  
Member of Congress

Rep. Lou Barletta  
Member of Congress

Rep. Roscoe Bartlett  
Member of Congress

Rep. Dan Benishek  
Member of Congress

Rep. Rick Berg  
Member of Congress
Rep. Gus Bilirakis
Member of Congress

Rep. Rob Bishop
Member of Congress

Rep. Diane Black
Member of Congress

Rep. Marsha Blackburn
Member of Congress

Rep. Dan Boren
Member of Congress

Rep. Leonard Boswell
Member of Congress

Rep. Charles Boustany
Member of Congress

Rep. Bruce Braley
Member of Congress

Rep. Larry Bucshon
Member of Congress

Rep. Ann Marie Buerkle
Member of Congress

Rep. Dan Burton
Member of Congress

Rep. Dave Camp
Member of Congress
Rep. Francisco "Quico" Canseco
Member of Congress

Rep. Shelley Moore Capito
Member of Congress

Rep. John Carter
Member of Congress

Rep. Bill Cassidy
Member of Congress

Rep. Ben Chandler
Member of Congress

Rep. Howard Coble
Member of Congress

Rep. Tom Cole
Member of Congress

Rep. Michael Conaway
Member of Congress

Rep. Jim Costa
Member of Congress

Rep. Joe Courtney
Member of Congress

Rep. Chip Cravaack
Member of Congress

Rep. Rick Crawford
Member of Congress
Rep. Chuck Fleischmann
Member of Congress

Rep. John Fleming
Member of Congress

Rep. Jeff Fortenberry
Member of Congress

Rep. Cory Gardner
Member of Congress

Rep. Bob Gibbs
Member of Congress

Rep. Phil Gingrey
Member of Congress

Rep. Paul Gosar
Member of Congress

Rep. Trey Gowdy
Member of Congress

Rep. Tom Graves
Member of Congress

Rep. Sam Graves
Member of Congress

Rep. Tim Griffin
Member of Congress

Rep. H. Morgan Griffith
Member of Congress
Bill Johnson  
Rep. Bill Johnson  
Member of Congress

Tim Johnson  
Rep. Tim Johnson  
Member of Congress

Walter B. Jones  
Rep. Walter B. Jones  
Member of Congress

Mike Kelly  
Rep. Mike Kelly  
Member of Congress

Ron Kind  
Rep. Ron Kind  
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Steve King  
Rep. Steve King  
Member of Congress

Adam Kinzinger  
Rep. Adam Kinzinger  
Member of Congress

Larry Kissell  
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John Kline  
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Member of Congress

Jeff Landry  
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Member of Congress

James Lankford  
Rep. James Lankford  
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Tom Latham  
Rep. Tom Latham  
Member of Congress
Rep. Ted Poe
Member of Congress

Rep. Jim Renacci
Member of Congress

Rep. Mike Pompeo
Member of Congress

Rep. Reid Ribble
Member of Congress

Rep. Martha Roby
Member of Congress

Rep. Phil Roe
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Rep. Hal Rogers
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Rep. Mike Rogers
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Rep. Todd Rokita
Member of Congress

Rep. Dennis Ross
Member of Congress

Rep. Mike Ross
Member of Congress

Rep. Steve Scalise
Member of Congress
Rep. Jean Schmidt  
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Rep. Aaron Schock  
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Rep. Kurt Schrader  
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Rep. Austin Scott  
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Rep. Tammy Baldwin
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Rep. Dave Reichert
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