

June 10, 2013

The Honorable Susan Collins  
United States Senate  
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Collins:

I am writing on behalf of the Maine Innkeepers Association to express our strong support for comprehensive immigration reform, and to thank you for your efforts to address this critical issue.

As you know, the seasonal nature of Maine's tourism industry makes us particularly reliant on immigrant and guest worker labor. We have struggled with the complicated nature of the H-2B visa programs for many years, and the failure of the federal government to untangle our immigration system results in tremendous costs to our Maine businesses.

We are optimistic that the current "Gang of Eight" legislation that is currently moving through Congress will be a solid first step toward a more reasonable immigration system. In particular, we are hopeful that the needs of Maine's lodging industry are kept in mind as the final bill takes shape.

We believe the H-2B provisions of this bill are generally beneficial to both seasonal businesses like ours, and our workers. Specifically, the bill's re-statement of the returning worker exemption is important to our members. As the economy improves, there will be more demand for seasonal workers, placing more pressure on the program's arbitrary cap. However, we believe that the exemption should be permanent rather than sunset after 5 years.

We also have concerns about the potential for increased costs to our members through the new requirements for employers to pay transportation costs and a new labor certification fee, as well as the threat of potentially frivolous litigation based on the bill's parameters for foreign labor recruiting practices. These are areas we hope you will pay special attention to as the bill moves through the amendment process.

On behalf of our members, I thank you again for your willingness to stand up for Maine businesses on this and so many other issues. I would look forward to the opportunity to speak directly with you or your staff in the event the perspective of our industry would be helpful to you during this process.

Sincerely,

Greg Dugal  
Executive Director,  
Maine Innkeepers Association