

December 13, 2017

Dear Members of Congress and Acting Deputy Under Secretary Rottenberg,

We are writing on behalf of some of the most vulnerable people in our country: poultry processing workers. Every day, the health and safety of these hard-working people is in jeopardy due to ever-increasing line speeds, the hiring of unskilled workers without proper training, and other indignities like being refused bathroom or water breaks.

As faith leaders, we call on you as elected officials to use your power to improve the working conditions inside poultry plants by rejecting the Agricultural Guestworker Act (H.R. 4092) and by ensuring Department of Agriculture rules on line speeds are left intact or tightened to reduce the epidemic of injuries suffered by poultry workers as their quotas are increased to fatten the bottom line of investors and corporate executives.

The Agricultural Guestworker Act, (H.R. 4092) would introduce guestworkers into a poultry industry rife with abuse of working people. Even as Congress considers this expansion of the guestworker program, the Department of Agriculture will likely loosen the rules on line speeds in poultry plants, putting even more working people in harm's way. With that in mind, we write today to express our strong opposition to both the Agricultural Guestworkers Act and the loosening or elimination of the rule on poultry processing line speeds.

The result would be to convert a significant segment of the poultry industry into a labor force of temporary guestworkers with virtually no workplace protections and with no opportunity to join the communities they are helping to feed, all while suffering continuous indignities and increasingly dangerous labor.

As people of faith, we believe that labor has a sacred bond with the dignity of all people. However we labor, our work contributes to the creation of community, the richness and diversity of culture, a chance for every human to connect in fellowship with one another.

We write you today in good faith, and ask you to reject the Agricultural Guestworker Act (H.R. 4092) and do everything in your power to oppose the Department of Agriculture from allowing poultry corporations to increase line speeds and put working people's lives in danger just to make a little bit more money.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Baptists

Bend the Arc Jewish Action

Disciples Center of Public Witness

Disciples Justice Action Network

Faith in Public Life

Franciscan Action Network

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Interfaith Worker Justice

Islamic Relief USA

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

National Council of Churches

Network Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

Pax Christi USA

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Union for Reform Judaism

United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries

The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society

Unitarian Universalist Association