



STATE OF MAINE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
1 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0001

Paul R. LePage

GOVERNOR

September 7, 2017

President Donald J. Trump
Vice President Michael R. Pence
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Re: J-1 Summer Work Travel Program

Dear Mr. President and Mr. Vice President,

It has come to my attention that your administration is considering eliminating the J-1 Summer Work Travel, Intern, Trainee, Camp Counselor and Au Pair programs. I am writing to advise you that these programs are important to Maine's economy, which is fueled by the tourism industry.

Maine's economy has reached an all-time high of payroll jobs, many of them being year-round. Our unemployment rate has fallen to 3%, the lowest likely ever. However, Maine is also the oldest state in the nation. The tight labor market, combined with our aging population, has created a workforce shortage.

Importantly, Maine's small population of 1.3 million people welcomes over 35 million visitors each year, with 25 million arriving between Memorial Day and Labor Day. In 2016, almost 5,000 J-1 participants filled an important need in Maine's tourism and hospitality workforce.

Similar to the H2B visa program in our agricultural industries, the J-1 fills a void for many seasonal employers. The J-1 participants are predominantly young (85% are under 30) and work in hotels, restaurants, retail businesses and as camp counselors. If Maine's workforce supported these jobs, I assure you we would hire American workers first. We are working to solve the problem of our aging workforce, but need to stay open for business in the interim.

The elimination of these programs would leave a gap in Maine's tourism industry, the backbone of our economy, and would result in slowing our economic growth.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please contact me. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Paul R. LePage

Governor

CC: Rex Tillerson, Secretary of State



PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

TTY USERS CALL 711

www.maine.gov

PHONE: (207) 287-3531 (Voice)

FAX: (207) 287-1034