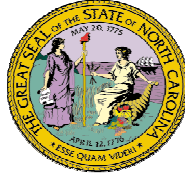


STEVE TROXLER  
COMMISSIONER



State of North Carolina  
*Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services*  
Raleigh

April 16, 2009

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my support for the Agriculture Reimbursement of Expenses for Legal Immigrant Employees in Farming legislation introduced in both the North Carolina House and Senate, also referred to as the AgRELIEF Act (H1364 and S881).

Despite the downturn in the economy, farmers across North Carolina continue to struggle with securing the workers they need to maintain their farming operations. The success of much of our agricultural industry, and therefore the success of our state's economy, is largely dependent upon our farmers' ability to contract with a reliable, qualified workforce. According to the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), North Carolina farmers spent over \$830 million on agricultural labor in 2007, a figure representing 122% of the cost they invested in that same expenditure in 2006. (See "Farm Production Expenditures, 2007 Summary," August 2008.) In light of rising labor and other input costs, all of our farmers need all the advantages they can get to compete in a global economy.

Notably, the AgRELIEF Act helps off-set costs imposed by the federal government which actually discourage farmers' use of the H-2A program. In other words, without reimbursement or some cost-share, farmers who use the H-2A program are, because of the costs imposed by the federal government, at a competitive disadvantage when compared to employers who use illegal workers. The AgRELIEF Act addresses that disparity.

The AgRELIEF Act is a signal that our legislators are willing to encourage and assist our farmers, as opposed to stringing up more red tape that ultimately hampers their effectiveness and efficiency.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steven W. Troxler".

Steven W. Troxler  
Commissioner