Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

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.

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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
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Rep. Gus Bilirakis
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Rep. Diane Black
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Rep. Marsha Blackburn
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Rep. Dan Boren
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Rep. Leonard Boswell
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Rep. Charles Boustany
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Rep. Bruce Braley
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Rep. Ann Marie Buerkle
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Rep. Dan Burton
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Rep. Dave Camp
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Rep. Shelley Moore Capito
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Rep. Ben Chandler
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Member of Congress

Rep. Joe Courtney
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Rep. Chip Cravaack
Member of Congress

Rep. Rick Crawford
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Rep. Ander Crenshaw
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Rep. Mark Critz
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Rep. Geoff Davis
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Rep. Peter DeFazio
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