

## Governor applauds visas aiding crab industry

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**ANNAPOLIS, MD** - On Monday, April 1, Governor Larry Hogan praised the decision by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to release an additional 30,000 visas through the H-2B Nonimmigrant Temporary Worker Program. H-2B workers are critical for Maryland's seasonal blue crab industry and sweet corn processors. The governor also renewed his call for a permanent, long-term fix, such as reinstating the Returning Worker Exemption, expanding the current Seafood Exemption, or eliminating the cap altogether.

"I am pleased that the federal government has heeded our calls to raise the cap on the H-2B visa program, allowing our iconic processing houses on the Eastern Shore to open for business this year," said Governor Hogan. "This is good news for this year, but we still need a long-term solution to this problem. I am calling on Congress to do the right thing and take action to ensure our crab houses have the workers they need to be successful."

On March 14, Hogan called on federal administration officials to reverse the 2018 decision to limit the number of visas available through the H-2B program and released a short film, *The Watermen of Hoopers Island*, which highlighted the threat that arbitrary federal visa policy changes posed to the crabbing industry. On Friday, Governor Hogan discussed the issue during a meeting with Maryland's congressional delegation.

"A second year of hardship could permanently damage Maryland's seafood industry, causing these iconic family businesses to close and having a devastating impact on jobs in our state," said the governor in March. "The loss of these jobs and processors will threaten the livelihoods of commercial crabbers and watermen, and jeopardize our \$355 million seafood industry."

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