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4TH DISTRICT, COLORADO

ENERGY AND COMMERCE COMMITTEE
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0604
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The Honorable Hilda Solis
Secretary of Labor
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Secretary Solis:

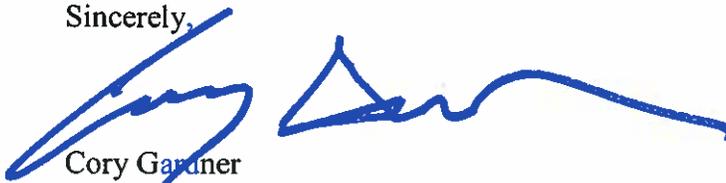
Following the proposed changes to the Fair Labor Standards Act many in the agricultural community have expressed concerns about the negative impact these new regulations would have on the agricultural industry. I am writing today to oppose this rule change and share the fears of Colorado agricultural organizations as they explain the vast implications of this far-reaching proposal.

This rule change will target numerous aspects of agriculture and detrimentally alter the family farm. Most notably, this rule will hurt educational opportunities for youth such as 4-H and Future Farmers of America threatening generations of agriculture. The Colorado Farm Bureau states the following in their public comments, "Farmers and ranchers have no interest or desire in placing youth at risk on the farm. We recognize that youth employment on farms and ranches in certain occupations can be positive, enriching, and rewarding." The consequences of this rule could prove devastating to youth wishing to pursue a career in agriculture. No one supports violating child labor laws, but criminalizing a teenager for bucking hay on his uncle's farm is just plain wrong.

Throughout Colorado, the typical farm is either family or multi-family owned and operated. This new proposed rule will change the definition of a family farm by stipulating that children will only be able to work on a farm owned directly by their parents. Children would be prohibited from working with their close relatives or even grandparents. In their comments, the Colorado Cattlemen's Association states, "We are concerned with the interpretation of the DOL that seeks to tie the exemption to both the person providing oversight of the youth/worker AND the location of the work being performed." This new regulation will dramatically change the farm culture of agriculture in Colorado.

These proposed rules are a solution in search of a problem. To move forward would be irresponsible and devastating to family run farms. I ask that you heed the advice of the American agricultural community and abandon these changes immediately. Your consideration is appreciated and I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Cory Gardner
Member of Congress (CO-4)