

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 25, 2016

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

To protect children, the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and its associated regulations limit the work permitted by minors, generally restricting child employment in non-agricultural work to jobs not deemed hazardous and to children 16 and older. However, in the agricultural sector, labor laws allow work by much younger children and permit hazardous work by children ages 16 and older. Children working in agriculture risk pesticide poisoning, serious injury, and heat illness. Over the past few decades, GAO has reported periodically on working children, noting injuries and deaths among child workers – particularly among male children and those employed in agriculture.¹ Most recently, Human Rights Watch has pointed to the health consequences experienced by children working on U.S. tobacco farms and cited reduced rates of school completion and other challenges for these young workers.²

Accordingly, I am writing to request that GAO update its work on the risks associated with child labor in the United States, the data currently available to monitor these risks, and the oversight provided by the Department of Labor to protect the welfare of children in the workforce. Specifically, I would like GAO to address the following questions:

- What are the trends in the number and characteristics of children working in the United States?
- What is known about the safety, health, and educational attainment of children employed in agricultural and non-agricultural occupations, particularly those employed in work deemed hazardous?


¹ See, for example, U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Child Labor: Labor Can Strengthen Its Efforts to Protect Children Who Work*, GAO-02-880 (Sept. 27, 2002); and U.S. General Accounting Office, *Child Labor: Characteristics of Working Children*, GAO/HRD-91-83BR (June 14, 1991).

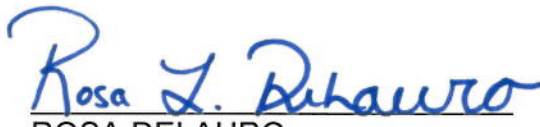
² Human Rights Watch, *Teens of the Tobacco Fields: Child Labor in United States Tobacco Farming*, (December 9, 2015).

- What gaps exist in data on children working in U.S. agriculture, including children working on tobacco farms?
- How effectively has DOL worked on its own and in concert with other agencies, including USDA, to enforce FLSA restrictions on child labor and reduce associated risks for both hazardous and non-hazardous occupations, including tobacco farming?

If you have any questions, please contact Victoria Coats of Congresswoman Roybal-Allard's staff at (202) 225-1766. Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,


LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD
Member of Congress


ROSA DELAURO
Ranking Member of United States House
of Representatives Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health, Human
Services, and Education, and Related
Agencies