

November 15, 2021

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Granger:

As stakeholders interested in the security and facilitation activities of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) at air, sea, and land ports-of-entry around the world, we remain greatly affected by the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic and its impact on the processing of passengers and cargo. As the U.S. economy recovers and international trade and travel begin to reach pre-pandemic levels, we are increasingly concerned that CBP staffing may not be sufficient to address this increased volume.

While we are appreciative that both the House and Senate DHS Appropriations bills maintain funding for current CBP officer staffing levels, we are disappointed that neither bill included additional resources for CBP to hire new officers. With our air, sea, and land ports reopened to international travelers that are fully vaccinated on November 8 and cruise ships resuming full operations on January 15<sup>th</sup>, we are seeing a surge in travelers that will need to be processed by CBP officers. Couple that with the identified need of 1,785 new officers in CBP's most recent workload staffing model, finalized when COVID-related international travel restrictions were in place, it is clear that the agency needs additional officers to smoothly process travelers and cargo without long delays at our ports of entry and to facilitate new economic opportunities in communities throughout the United States. That is why we respectively reiterate our original request and are asking you to consider during conference negotiations funding for 800 additional CBP officers—half the identified need—in the final FY 2022 DHS appropriations bill.

Also, we should recognize CBP's continued shortfall in user fees collections that support 8,000 CBP officers at our ports of entry and preclearance operations at foreign airports as a result of the precipitous decrease in travel during the COVID pandemic. We greatly appreciate Congress providing supplemental resources last year to ensure that the agency maintains its staffing levels and continues to onboard new officers during the pandemic. We also are appreciative of the language included in the current continuing resolution that prevents the agency from furloughing staff due to pandemic-related loss of user fee funding. We believe additional emergency funding will be needed in the final FY 2022 DHS appropriation agreement to sustain CBP officers as user fees have not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels and urge this funding be included in the final agreement.

Increasing CBP officer staffing is an economic driver for the U.S. economy. While the volume of commerce crossing our borders has more than tripled in the past 25 years, CBP staffing has not kept pace with demand. Long wait times at our ports-of-entry lead to travel delays and uncertainty, which can increase supply-chain costs and cause passengers to miss their

connections. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, border delays result in losses to output, wages, jobs, and tax revenue due to decreases in spending by companies, suppliers, and consumers. The travel industry estimates long CBP wait times have discouraged international visitors, who spend an average of \$4,200 per visit, from traveling to the United States.

We share your commitment to ensuring that America's borders remain safe, secure, and efficient for all users while enhancing our global competitiveness through the facilitation of legitimate travel and trade. We greatly appreciate your efforts to continue building on staffing advances made in recent years, and we urge you to include FY 2022 funding to sustain the current CBP officers, provide funding to hire new ones, and make up for the user fee funding shortfall.

Sincerely,