

April 18, 2023

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

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

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairs Granger and Murray, Ranking Member DeLauro, and Vice Chair Collins:

The following stakeholders interested in Customs and Border Protection (CBP) trade and travel facilitation activities at air, sea, and land ports-of-entry urge you to include funding in the fiscal year 2024 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act to hire at least 600 new CBP officers plus accompanying staff within the Office of Field Operations (OFO).

International travel and trade continue to rebound, but wait times to process travelers and cargo at our port-of-entry are growing. CBP needs additional personnel to alleviate critical staffing shortages throughout the system. The agency's most recent workload staffing model shows a need to hire at least 1,750 CBP officers, 250 agriculture specialists, and 100 non-uniformed trade specialists to address current staffing shortfalls at the ports-of-entry.

American businesses rely on the safe and efficient movement of goods and people across our borders. Long wait times at our ports-of-entry lead to delays and uncertainty, which can increase supply-chain costs and cause travelers and cargo to miss their connections and get left behind. 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 also estimates long CBP wait times discourage international visitors, who spend an average of \$4,200 per visit, from traveling to the United States. Additionally, the Joint Economic Committee has found that border delays cost the U.S. economy upwards of \$5 billion annually.

Complicating the nationwide shortfall is the agency's now-routine decision to reassign CBP officers from air, sea, and northern border ports temporarily to land ports-of-entry along the Southwest border to assist with processing activities. Since April 2022, CBP reassigned nearly 2,000 CBP officers in seven different waves, creating staffing shortages at our air, sea, and northern border ports. As these 60-day waves of temporary reassignments show no signs of letting up, additional CBP officers and support staff would help alleviate some of the impacts of these redeployments, as well as allow for more efficient processing of travelers and cargo without long delays at our domestic and preclearance ports-of-entry.

We share your commitment to ensuring that America's borders remain safe, secure, and efficient for all users, while also enhancing our global competitiveness through the facilitation of legitimate travel and trade. Providing at least 600 new CBP officers plus accompanying staff in fiscal year 2024 would help reduce lengthy wait times and facilitate new economic opportunities in communities throughout the United States.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Please let us know if we can be of any assistance in your efforts.

Sincerely,

Airports Council International – North America
National Treasury Employees Union
American Association of Airport Executives
American Association of Port Authorities
Airforwarders Association
Association of Ship Brokers & Agents
Big River Coalition
The Borderplex Alliance
Border Trade Alliance
Cargo Airline Association
City of Douglas, AZ
Cruise Lines International Association
Douglas International Port Authority
Columbia River Steamship Operators' Association
Fresh Produce Association of the Americas
Global Business Travel Association
Greater Nogales Santa Cruz County Port Authority
Greater Yuma Port Authority
The International Air Cargo Association
International Air Transport Association
International Inbound Travel Association
The International Propeller Club
Louisiana Maritime Association
Marine Exchange of Puget Sound
Maritime Association of the Port of NY/NJ
Maritime Exchange for the Delaware River and Bay
National Association of Maritime Organizations
National Association of Waterfront Employers
National Customs Brokers & Forwarders Association of America
Philadelphia Customs Brokers & Forwarders Association
Texas International Produce Association
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
West Gulf Maritime Association