

October 28, 2019

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

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Lowey, Chairman Shelby, Ranking Member Granger, and Vice Chairman Leahy:

As stakeholders interested in the facilitation activities of Customs and Border Protection (CBP), we are all affected by the shortfall of CBP officers at our land, sea, and air ports-of-entry around the globe. To help the agency meet its current and future staffing needs, we strongly urge that the final Fiscal Year 2020 Homeland Security Appropriations Act include a House provision to fund 1,200 new CBP officers over the current staffing level.

With CBP's onboard data and most recent workload staffing model showing a shortage of over 2,700 officers, current staffing levels fail to address the growing demands of travel and trade at our ports-of-entry. Providing additional CBP officers at this time of growing volumes of international passengers and cargo would both reduce lengthy wait times and facilitate new economic opportunities in communities throughout the United States.

Increasing CBP officer staffing is an economic driver for the U.S. economy. According to the Joint Economic Committee (JEC), "every day 1.1 million people and \$5.9 billion in goods legally enter and exit through the ports of entry." CBP estimates that the annual hiring of an additional 1,200 CBP officers at the ports-of-entry could increase yearly economic activity by over \$2 billion and result in the addition of over 34,000 new jobs.

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 discourage international visitors, who spend an average of \$4,200 per visit, from traveling to the United States. JEC research also finds border delays cost the U.S. economy upwards of \$5 billion each year.

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 strongly urge you to include funding for new 1,200 CBP officers in the final Fiscal Year 2020 Homeland Security Appropriations Act.

Sincerely,

Airports Council International – North America
American Association of Port Authorities
National Treasury Employees Union
American Association of Airport Executives
American Society of Travel Advisors
American Trucking Associations
Borderplex Alliance
Border Trade Alliance
Cruise Lines International Association
Fresh Produce Association of the Americas
Global Business Travel Association
National Association of Waterfront Employers
New York Shipping Association
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
United States Maritime Alliance