

June 17, 2019

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Vice Chairman Leahy:

As stakeholders interested in the activities of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Customs and Border Protection (CBP) at land, sea, and air ports-of-entry (POEs) around the globe, we urge you to support the Administration's request for supplemental appropriations to cover CBP operations for the remainder of this fiscal year. This funding is needed to support CBP Officer (CBPO) staffing, overtime, and travel costs related to ongoing redeployment of CBPOs from POEs to address the national emergency situation along the southern border. This funding will ensure that the cross-border commerce critical to our economy is not impeded.

U.S. businesses rely on the safe and efficient movement of goods and people across our borders. However, recent activities by CBP in responding to the situation at the southern border are having enormous impacts on this flow of goods and people. In April, CBP reassigned 545 officers from U.S.-Mexico POEs to support U.S. Border Patrol operations at the southern border, severely tightening inspection capacity at the border and other POEs, and dramatically increasing wait times. It took freight up to seven hours to cross at the Bridge of Americas in El Paso, Texas, in April 2019, whereas it took less than an hour to enter the U.S. at the same time last year. Similarly, it took freight four hours to cross into the U.S. at Otay Mesa, California, in April 2019, as compared to nearly two hours in April 2018.

In May, CBP increased the redeployment to 731 CBPOs, with 245 coming from U.S.-Mexico POEs and the remaining 486 from POEs along the northern border, as well as from airports and seaports throughout the U.S. It is not clear when these redeployments will end, but it is already having an impact. According to CBP's own onboard data and workload staffing model the agency is already operating at a deficit of 3,700 officers. So, every officer taken away from a POE is having a significant impact on processing goods and people. For instance, U.S. international hub airports like Chicago-O'Hare, New York's John F. Kennedy, Los Angeles International, San Francisco International, and Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson International routinely saw wait times for non-U.S. citizens to clear Customs and Immigration of two and three hours since the beginning of April. We are also hearing reports that airports are experiencing increased delays and missed connections due to the redeployments.

We are increasingly concerned about how CBP's situation will impact the flow of goods and people at our POEs this summer. Already, CBP has announced it is suspending mandatory training so that it can keep more CBPOs at POEs. CBP is also planning to scale back services at its Global Entry enrollment centers in order to limit disruptions to airport customs processing.

We understand that CBP is also exploring steps to limit the disruption of people disembarking cruise ships at sea ports.

Without additional funding, we are concerned that these examples will be the first in a series of increasingly serious disruptions to CBP's critical customs and security work, and to the movement of people and goods at our borders and POEs. We are also concerned that this situation may force DHS to draw upon the resources of other DHS agencies to support CBP if Congress does not provide additional funding.

The critical issues that American businesses are facing because of the situation at the southern border require quick, decisive action so that our government can provide for both border security and the flow of travel and trade. As such, we ask that you provide the supplemental funding to help CBP respond effectively to the challenges it has to overcome now and in the immediate future.

Sincerely,

Airforwarders Association
Airlines for America
Airports Council International - North America
American Apparel & Footwear Association
American Association of Airport Executives
American Association of Exporters and Importers
American Association of Port Authorities
American Society of Travel Agents
American Trucking Associations
Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Arizona Manufacturers Council
Border Trade Alliance
Borderplex Alliance
Brawley Chamber of Commerce
California Chamber of Commerce
Cargo Airline Association
City of Douglas
City of San Luis, Arizona
Del Rio Chamber of Commerce
Delta Air Lines
DHL
Douglas Industrial Development Authority
Douglas International Port Authority
Douglas Regional Economic Development Corporation
El Paso Chamber of Commerce
Express Association of America
Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association
FedEx
Fresh Produce Association of the Americas

Gilbert Chamber of Commerce
Global Business Travel Association
Global Cold Chain Alliance
Greater Coachella Valley Chamber of Commerce
Greater Merced Chamber of Commerce
Greater Nogales Santa Cruz County Port Authority
Greater Phoenix Chamber of Commerce
Hueneme Chamber of Commerce
Inland Empire Regional Chamber of Commerce
International Air Transport Association
Lake Havasu Area Chamber of Commerce
Laredo Chamber of Commerce
Lexington Institute
Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce
McAllen Chamber of Commerce
Nashville Area Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
National Association of Waterfront Employers
National Customs Brokers and Forwarders Association of America
National Industrial Transportation League
National Retail Federation
National Treasury Employees Union
New Mexico Association of Commerce and Industry
Nogales-Santa Cruz County Chamber of Commerce
North San Diego Business Chamber
Otay Mesa Chamber of Commerce
Oxnard Chamber of Commerce
Pasadena Chamber of Commerce
Port of Baltimore, Maryland
Port of Los Angeles, California
Port of Monroe, Michigan
Port of Oakland, California
Regional Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Ryder System, Inc.
San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce
San Gabriel Valley Economic Partnership
San Ysidro Chamber of Commerce
Surprise Regional Chamber of Commerce
Texas Association of Business
Texas International Produce Association
Torrance Area Chamber of Commerce
Transportation Intermediaries Association
Travel Goods Association
Truck Renting and Leasing Association
Tucson Metro Chamber
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
U.S. Travel Association

United States Council for International Business
UPS
West Gulf Maritime Association
Yuma County Chamber of Commerce