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April 13, 2021

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20016

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

On January 21, 2021, President Biden issued an executive order entitled *Promoting COVID-19 Safety in Domestic and International Travel* which directed the Cabinet to submit a plan within 14 days to implement appropriate public health measures at land ports of entry. I understand that your Department's efforts to carry out the executive order to develop policy to better manage and re-open the Northern Border as the pandemic continues. Nearly 3 months on from the order's signing by the President, I write you to advocate that the Department immediately advance concrete proposals for a phased re-opening of the Northern Border to our Canadian partners, and again call on the Department to immediately implement appropriate unilateral measures toward the normalization of the border, including promulgating a family reunification policy at least as generous as the policy implemented by the Government of Canada many months ago. Furthermore, at your earliest convenience, I would like to speak to you about the important challenges my constituents in Western New York are facing due to the continued border closure.

Over a year ago, the United States and Canada announced that all non-essential travel between our two countries would be restricted to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Exceptions were made in limited cases and the people of Western New York and Southern Ontario accepted these as necessary measures to take in the face of the worst public health crisis of the past century. During this time, many of my constituents sacrificed – wondering when they'd be able to see their families and loved ones again, manage their properties, and tend to some of their business interests in Canada. Their livelihoods and personal lives have been deeply affected.

Through each extension of the travel restrictions, my office urged the Department of Homeland Security and the previous administration to form a plan. Any plan based on science and public health metrics would assure the American people that their government was taking the pandemic seriously and assure them that we were working towards restoring a sense of normalcy where commerce and travel could resume. The prior administration failed to produce such a plan.

Since January 21, when the President issued his executive order, and February 2, when you were confirmed as Secretary of Homeland Security, I have eagerly awaited the publishing of a plan which allows for families to safely reunite, provides guidance to property owners, and prioritizes vaccines and

testing for all Customs and Border Protection (CBP) staff. The technical knowhow offered by your subject matter experts working through these priorities is welcomed. These proposed policies would provide hope to the American people and send a strong message to the Government of Canada that the United States is a serious partner and ready to negotiate on how to reopen the northern border safely and securely.

Thank you again for your efforts at the Department of Homeland Security, and that of your staff to implement the President's executive order. I look forward to receiving an update from you on this plan, urging its expeditious consideration through the Department and review by the White House. Furthermore, I hope to hear from you in response to this request and speaking to you about our shared interest to better manage the Northern Border during the pandemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian Higgins" with a small flourish at the end.

BRIAN HIGGINS
Member of Congress