

BRIAN HIGGINS
26TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRADE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SECURITY

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

ASSISTANT WHIP

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3226

2459 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-3306
(202) 226-0347 (FAX)

726 EXCHANGE STREET
SUITE 601
BUFFALO, NY 14210
(716) 852-3501
(716) 852-3929 (FAX)

800 MAIN STREET
SUITE 3C
NIAGARA FALLS, NY 14301
(716) 282-1274
(716) 282-2479 (FAX)
higgins.house.gov

October 9, 2020

President Donald J. Trump
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

I write to you regarding the Department of Homeland Security's recent decision to yet again extend the restrictions on the border between the United States and Canada without more precise standards. I am extremely sensitive to the overarching need to stop the spread of COVID-19, and the role that travel restrictions play in that critical mission. At the same time, our constituents along the northern border in New York, in those communities that have a low rate of infection and a low number of cases, have been suffering from this seemingly endless ban on their ability to engage in legitimate cross-border travel according to common sense safety metrics. Given the enormity of the northern border and the diversity of northern border regions, I believe that a more nuanced approach, taking regional COVID-19 transmission risks into account, is more appropriate than a uniform border-wide policy.

At the outset of the pandemic, New York was one of the states hardest hit by the COVID-19 virus. Guided by medical experts and scientists, we were able craft and implement a public health strategy that informed the public of the dangers of the virus, allocated necessary resources to medical institutions and health care providers, and implemented a phased shutdown and reopening of essential and non-essential services. As a result, New Yorkers have drastically reduced the rate of infection and the number of cases to the point that the state's rate of infection is amongst the lowest in the nation. We continue to be vigilant in monitoring the infection and transmission rates and have demonstrated the ability to adjust according to the public health data.

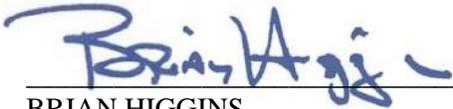
In light of these developments, I ask you to implement carefully calibrated exemptions to these restrictions – based on reasonable public health metrics – for property owners and those traveling to reunite with family across the border. The Canadian government has relaxed restrictions for travel of family members of Canadian citizens on two separate occasions already; first expanding the exemption for spouses, common law partners, parents and dependent children and then again recently creating a process for foreign nationals in exclusive dating relationships, grandchildren, grandparents, siblings, and non-dependent children to reunite with their Canadian loved ones. The United States, however, has yet to adopt similar exemptions for land border crossings. Although there are fewer restrictions for Canadians when flying into the United States,

crossing at a land port of entry is often the most convenient and economical for residents in border communities.

Your administration must take these developing considerations into account and modify cross-border travel restrictions to accommodate the shifting circumstances in our northern border region, including expanding exemptions for cross border travel.

Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

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

BRIAN HIGGINS
MEMBER OF CONGRESS