

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 3, 2019

The Honorable Kevin McAleenan
Acting Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Acting Secretary McAleenan:

We are writing to express our concern regarding recent reports that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) plans to transfer U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers from the nation's airports and ports of entry on the northern border to the southern border. The abrupt transfer of needed personnel on the northern border will have economic and security implications on the facilitation of U.S.-Canada cross border trade and travel.

The Northern Border constitutes the longest land boundary between two countries in the world. At 5,525 miles, approximately 400,000 people and over \$1.6 billion in goods cross the border daily through more than 120 ports of entry.¹ The infrastructure and resources allocated to the U.S.-Canadian border is essential to protecting the dynamic, yet interdependent, economic environments of border communities, as well as the countries broadly.

As you know, DHS outlined in the 2018 Northern Border Strategy a goal to facilitate and safeguard lawful trade and travel. Noting that,

“As the volume and frequency of border trade and travel continue to increase, DHS must ensure that POEs and other critical Northern Border facilities are sufficiently resourced, staffed, and that their infrastructure is capable of meeting mission requirements.”²

We are approaching the heaviest travel months of the year and ports of entry will be facing increased volume. The decision to deploy northern border CBP officers to the southern border makes it increasingly more difficult for the agency to meet their core mission requirements at the border which include effectively securing U.S. points of entry and safeguarding and streamlining lawful trade and travel. CBP's consistent inability to attain its statutorily established minimum staffing levels and the reduction of service hours at several land ports of entry along the northern border, coupled with further reduction of staffing due to this deployment will cause excessive delays at crossings, expose the nation to security risks, and highlight key vulnerabilities.³

¹ United States Department of Homeland Security. June 2018. *Department of Homeland Security Northern Border Strategy*. https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/18_0612_PLCY_DHS-Northern-Border-Strategy.pdf

² Ibid

³ United States Government Accountability Office. June 2018. *US Customs and Border Protection: Progress and Challenges in Recruiting, Hiring, and Retaining Law Enforcement Personnel* <https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/692832.pdf>

The vibrant communities supported by an integrated and fluent border relations rely on the presence of experienced, well-trained CBP officers. We ask that you immediately rescind the transfer of the Customs and Border Protection officers to the southern border and look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Rep. Brian Higgins
Northern Border Caucus Co-Chair



Rep. Elise Stefanik
Northern Border Caucus Co-Chair



Rep. Kelly Armstrong
Member of Congress



Rep. Chris Collins
Member of Congress



Rep. Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Rep. Dan Kildee
Member of Congress



Rep. Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress



Rep. Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



Rep. John Moolenaar
Member of Congress



Rep. Joseph Morelle
Member of Congress



Rep. Chris Pappas
Member of Congress



Rep. Collin Peterson
Member of Congress



Rep. Elissa Slotkin
Member of Congress