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Transportation

Michael E. Gonzalez
Education & Workforce
Development

Mission:
**To make legislative
recommendations to
help the Texas Border Region
grow and prosper economically.**



May 14, 2021

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20395

RE: Request to re-open ports of entry and remove travel restrictions between the United States, Mexico, and Canada.

Dear Secretary Mayorkas,

As the United States has made tremendous progress in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, we believe it is time for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), under your transformative leadership and in collaboration with the Biden-Harris Administration, to re-open our borders, and allow for cross-border travelers to enter our communities. Common-sense measures such as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), a negative COVID-19 test, and proof of vaccination can make cross-border travel safe for our citizens, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) personnel, and travelers alike.

In the past year, the global COVID-19 pandemic has caused physical, emotional, and economic suffering to millions of Americans. This includes tens of thousands of Texans living along the Texas-Mexico border. While Texas border leaders reluctantly accepted temporary limits on cross-border travel during the height of the pandemic, the "temporary" limits have now lasted for more than fourteen months. These restrictions have heavily paralyzed and devastated the economics of our border businesses and communities. In 2019, the Texas-Mexico border had an impact of more than \$19 billion in economic activity, supported over 650,000 jobs, and increased infrastructure development along our international boundaries.

Before the pandemic, the economy of our border communities relied on the influx of daily travelers from Mexico who acquire goods and services in the United States. However, the current border travel restrictions have dramatically limited these travelers and the critical cross-border exchange of business and commerce, leaving local border economies shattered. The year-long exclusion of these customers is harming our local economies, especially our retail, dining, and hospitality sectors. Severely restricting cross-border travel in this way is not an effective long-term policy and causes disproportionate economic impact to border communities.

More than a year after the travel restrictions took effect, we believe the time has come for your Department to remove these restrictions between the U.S., Mexico, and Canada. Our southern border has been receiving a high influx of immigrants seeking asylum and processing into the United States. If these individuals are being allowed into our homeland, we should also allow visa holders who need to visit family and conduct essential commercial activities. Collectively, we request re-opening our Land Ports of Entry (LPOEs) with sufficient lanes and a full complement of CBP staff to maintain efficient traffic. Instituting efficient and safe operations at our land ports will ensure that international travelers are able to contribute to

our border economy. We need international travelers conducting crucial commercial activities in our border region to revitalize our economy in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Your Department and the Biden-Harris Administration should also take every action possible to safeguard the health and safety of CBP personnel who protect our homeland and citizens. The TBC requests that CBP ensure that its personnel are vaccinated and adequately outfitted with PPE to protect the health of our officers, their families, our border communities, and all individuals seeking to cross our borders.

The Texas Border Coalition (TBC) acts as the collective voice of border communities on issues that affect Texas-Mexico border region's quality of life, commerce, and public policy. The TBC is comprised of mayors, city council members, county judges, county executives, businesses, corporations, and community leaders. Collectively, we represent more than 2.5 million people who reside along the more than 1,250 miles of the Texas-Mexico border, from Brownsville to El Paso, Texas. We believe in the economic vibrancy of our border region, its potential to revitalize is dependent on cross-border travelers.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this important request. We look forward to a positive response on this matter, which has a severe economic impact on many communities in the U.S.-Mexico border region. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out any of our border leaders whose names and signatures appear as collaborating advocacy partners on this critical issue below.

Sincerely,



The Honorable Eddie Treviño Jr.
Chairman, Texas Border Coalition
County Judge, Cameron County, Texas



C. LeRoy Cavazos-Reyna
Vice-Chairman, Texas Border Coalition
VP of Government and International Affairs, USHCC



The Honorable Pete Saenz
Mayor, City of Laredo, Texas



The Honorable David Suarez
Mayor, City of Weslaco, Texas



The Honorable Dr. Armando O'Caña
Mayor, City of Mission, Texas



The Honorable Juan "Trey" Mendez III
Mayor, City of Brownsville, Texas



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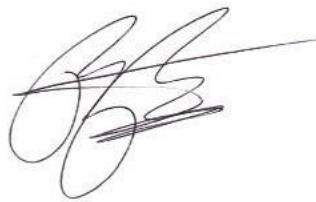
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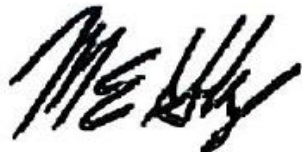
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Juan Antonio Flores
Chairman
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Dr. Mario Alberto López Hernández
Mayor of Matamoros



Michael E. Gonzalez
Senior Director of External Affairs
Laredo College Economic Development Center

CC: The Honorable Kamala Harris, Vice President of the United States
The Honorable Xavier Becerra, Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
The Honorable Esteban Moctezuma, Ambassador, Embassy of Mexico in the United States
Office of Public Engagement, The White House
The Honorable John Cornyn, U.S. Senator

The Honorable Ted Cruz, U.S. Senator
The Honorable Greg Abbott, Texas Governor
The Honorable Raul Ruiz, Chairman, Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) and CHC Members
Karinda Washington, Acting Assistant Secretary, Office of Partnership and Engagement, DHS
Charles L. Wollenhaupt, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary, Private Sector Office, DHS
Felicia Escobar Carrillo, Chief of Staff, U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services, DHS
Victor De Leon, Chief, Intergovernmental Affairs, Office of the Commissioner, DHS
Texas Border Congressional Caucus
Texas Border Legislative Delegation