

October 25, 2022

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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

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

Dear Chair DeLauro, Ranking Member Granger, Chair Leahy, and Vice Chair Shelby:

As you begin deliberations on final funding legislation for fiscal year 2023 (FY 2023), stakeholders interested in the trade and travel facilitation activities of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) at air, sea, and land ports-of-entry are writing to request your favorable consideration of two items: providing sufficient funding to hire additional CBP Office of Field Operations (OFO) staff, and restoring the continued shortfall in user fee revenue to support current CBP staffing levels and operations.

The House Appropriations Committee approved funding for CBP to hire at least 250 CBP Officers, 500 technicians, and 500 mission support staff in FY 2023. These personnel are needed to alleviate staffing shortages at all ports-of-entry. As of July 2022, CBP's most recent workload staffing model showed a shortage of 1,757 CBP Officers at ports-of-entry nationwide. This figure is double the officer gap that CBP estimated last year and wait times to process travelers and cargo are growing as a result.

Complicating the nationwide CBP Officer shortfall is the agency's decision to regularly reassign officers from air and seaports-of-entry to the Southwest border land ports to assist with processing activities. Since April 2022, CBP has deployed over 1,100 CBP Officers in four 60-day waves for temporary duty assignments to Southwest border ports, creating staffing shortages at non-border air and seaports. Additional CBP Officers and other OFO staff would help alleviate some of the impacts of these redeployments, as well as allow for more efficient processing of travelers and cargo without long delays at our domestic and preclearance ports-of-entry.

The Senate Chair's mark included funding to replace any ongoing user fee shortfalls to maintain the current number of CBP OFO employees and to ensure access to overtime at the ports-of-entry. For the past two years Congress has provided funding to CBP to offset the impact of reduced fee collections caused by greatly reduced international travel due to COVID-19. Unfortunately, this funding was not enough to meet FY 2022 user fee shortfall and CBP had to institute a 40-percent overtime cut and other operational changes for the final 36 days of the fiscal year to avoid furloughs. Given the ongoing volatile nature of international travel, and with current estimates still projecting fee shortfalls in FY 2023, we urge you to include at least \$187 million to help offset the projected user fee shortfall. Also, we would appreciate including a restatement of the Senate report language that provides the agency with the flexibility to utilize these resources to hire additional CBP Officers if fee collections exceed current estimates.

American businesses rely on the safe and efficient movement of goods and people across our borders, and everyone is working to safely resume and grow international trade and travel. Long wait times at our ports-of-entry lead to delays and uncertainty, which can increase supply-chain costs and cause travelers to miss their connections or get left behind at preclearance locations. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, border delays result in losses to output, wages, jobs, and tax revenue due to decreases in spending by companies, suppliers, and consumers. The travel industry also estimates long CBP wait times discourage international visitors, who spend an average of \$4,200 per visit, from traveling to the United States. Additionally, the Joint Economic Committee has found that border delays cost the U.S. economy upwards of \$5 billion annually.

We share your commitment to ensuring that America's borders remain safe, secure, and efficient for all users while enhancing our global competitiveness through the facilitation of legitimate travel and trade. However, without appropriated funding to support hiring at least 250 new CBP Officers and funding to address the ongoing user fee shortfall in FY 2023, we will not have the CBP Officer staffing levels necessary to successfully transition into a more robust, safe, and delay-free travel environment and improve cargo movement. Even more troubling, CBP likely will lose the hiring and staffing advances it finally started to gain, after years of effort.

Thank you for your leadership on these important matters. Please let us know if we can be of any assistance to your efforts.

Sincerely,

Airports Council International – North America
American Association of Airport Executives
American Association of Port Authorities
National Treasury Employees Union
National Association of Waterfront Employers
Advance Customs Brokers & Consulting LLC
American Society of Travel Advisors
American Trucking Associations
The Arizona-Mexico Commission
Association of Ship Brokers & Agents
Associates Warehousing, Inc.
Big River Coalition
The Borderplex Alliance
Border Trade Alliance
Canadian American Business Council
Cargo Airline Association
CMS Transportation, Inc.
Connecticut Maritime Association
Dayka Hackett
Douglas International Port Authority
Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association
Fresh Produce Association of the Americas
GAC North America - Shipping
General Marine & Industrial Services, Inc.
GEODIS USA, LLC

Global Business Travel Association
Greater Nogales Santa Cruz County Port Authority
Greater Yuma Airport Authority
Greater Yuma Port Authority
The International Air Cargo Association
International Inbound Travel Association
Louisiana Maritime Association
Maritime Association of New York & New Jersey
Maritime Exchange for the Delaware River and Bay
National Association of Maritime Organizations
Norton Lilly International
Pilots' Association for the Bay & River Delaware
San Diego – Tijuana Smart Border Coalition
Sandpiper International S/S Agencies, Inc.
Seamen's Center of Wilmington, Inc.
South Jersey Port Corporation
Southwest Port Users Association
United States Great Lakes Shipping Association
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
U.S. Travel Association
Vane Line Bunkering, LLC
Virginia Maritime Association
West Gulf Maritime Association
Western Fumigation
721 Logistics, LLC