

CBP STAFFING COALITION

June 12, 2023

The Honorable Gary Peters
Chair
Committee on Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rand Paul
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Peters, Ranking Member Paul, and Members of the Committee:

The following stakeholders interested in Customs and Border Protection (CBP) trade and travel facilitation at air, sea, and land ports-of-entry are writing in strong support of S. 1253, *the Securing America's Ports of Entry Act*, which would increase the authorized number of CBP officers by 600 annually to help the agency meet its current and future staffing needs. The bill also would provide better information about CBP's infrastructure needs at its ports-of-entry, as well as much needed transparency and accountability regarding the agency's increasing reliance on reimbursable services agreements and temporary duty assignments to cover its system-wide staffing shortfalls.

International travel and trade continue to rebound, but wait times to process travelers and cargo at our ports-of-entry are growing. CBP needs additional personnel to alleviate critical staffing shortages throughout the system. The agency's most recent workload staffing model, completed in July 2022, shows a need to hire at least 1,750 CBP officers, 250 agriculture specialists, and 100 non-uniformed trade specialists to address current staffing shortfalls at the ports-of-entry. We anticipate the next workload staffing model, slated to be released later this summer, will identify a much higher number of officers and specialists needed to handle the increased volume of international travel and trade we are seeing at air, land, and sea ports-of entry.

American businesses rely on the safe and efficient movement of goods and people across our borders. Long wait times at our ports-of-entry lead to delays and uncertainty, which can increase supply-chain costs and cause travelers and cargo to miss their connections and get left behind. 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.

Complicating the nationwide shortfall is the agency's now-routine decision to reassign CBP officers from air, sea, and northern border ports temporarily to land ports-of-entry along the Southwest border to assist with processing activities. Since April 2022, CBP reassigned nearly 2,500 CBP officers in eight different waves, creating staffing shortages at our air, sea, and northern border ports. As these 60-day waves of temporary reassignments show no signs of letting up, additional CBP officers and support staff would help alleviate some of the impacts of these redeployments and allow for more efficient processing of travelers and cargo without long delays at our domestic and preclearance ports-of-entry.

We share your commitment to ensuring that America's borders remain safe, secure, and efficient for all users, while also enhancing our global competitiveness through the facilitation of legitimate travel and trade. Providing at least 600 new CBP officers plus accompanying staff each year would help reduce lengthy wait times and facilitate new economic opportunities in communities throughout the United States.

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

Sincerely,

Airports Council International – North America
National Treasury Employees Union
American Association of Airport Executives
American Association of Port Authorities
Airforwarders Association
American Society of Travel Advisors
Association of Ship Brokers & Agents
Big River Coalition
The Borderplex Alliance
Border Trade Alliance
Cargo Airline Association
City of Douglas, AZ
Columbia River Steamship Operators' Association
Cruise Lines International Association
Douglas International Port Authority
Columbia River Steamship Operators' Association
Fresh Produce Association of the Americas
Global Business Travel Association
Greater Nogales Santa Cruz County Port Authority
Greater Yuma Port Authority
The International Air Cargo Association
International Air Transport Association
International Inbound Travel Association
The International Propeller Club
Louisiana Maritime Association
Marine Exchange of Puget Sound
Maritime Association of the Port of NY/NJ
Maritime Exchange for the Delaware River and Bay
National Association of Maritime Organizations
National Association of Waterfront Employers
National Customs Brokers & Forwarders Association of America
Philadelphia Customs Brokers & Forwarders Association
Smart Border Coalition
Texas International Produce Association
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
U.S. Travel Association
West Gulf Maritime Association