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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
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WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

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February 26, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

I write to request your consideration of several matters as you review agency recommendations for public health protocols at land borders following your Executive Order on Promoting COVID-19 Safety in Domestic and International Travel.¹ I, as well as my constituents from Michigan, have concerns about the impacts of land border travel restrictions on border communities—personal and economic. I share your goals to establish public health protocols that protect the lives of Americans, improve the safety of travel, and promote the revival of our economy. To achieve these goals, I urge you to consider several matters for public health protocols for travel at land ports of entry.

In the implementation of public health measures at land ports of entry, it is essential to prioritize communication and clarity to our citizens. I have consistently raised the importance of transparent communication about the status of border restrictions with affected communities. As you consider public health protocols, I urge you to include procedures to clearly communicate current protocols, publicly disclose criteria driving any travel restrictions or measures, and the intended stages for off-ramping restrictions. It is also critical to provide clear information about what is required to determine an individual's exemption from restrictions, such as proof of vaccination or other documentation.

The restrictions at land ports of entry, which were recently extended and will soon reach one full year, were urgently set into place at the beginning of the U.S. and Canada spread of the virus and have seen few changes. Over this period, Michigan's cross-border communities have faced challenges conducting daily life. These communities have integrated economies and work forces, as evidenced by the thousands of healthcare workers that live in Canada and work in Detroit. Such challenges are compounded by differences between U.S. and Canadian exemption policies for categories, such as family. As I have previously asked the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), I urge the administration to consider how restrictions may be clarified or adjusted to address the concerns of cross-border communities as agencies engage the Canadian government to evaluate the status of public health measures.

¹ Exec. Order No. 13998, 86 Fed. Reg. 7205 (Jan. 21, 2021).

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We must also ensure public health protocols protect DHS frontline workers who have continued to facilitate trade and travel at land ports of entry throughout the pandemic. I appreciate your administration's commitment to reviewing the public health measures at land ports of entry with a goal of making travel safe and galvanizing our economy.

In Michigan, cross-border travel is inherently essential and I look forward to working with you so that we may fully return to it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary C. Peters", written over a horizontal line.

Gary C. Peters
Chairman