

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 17, 2020

The Honorable Donald Trump  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to you with concern about how Canada's new travel restrictions will impact novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) response efforts here in the United States. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau recently announced that beginning March 18, the Government of Canada will "[b]ar foreign nationals from all countries except the United States from entering Canada."<sup>1</sup> All individuals that are allowed entry are advised to "self-isolate for 14 days upon returning to Canada."<sup>2</sup> While we understand why limiting unnecessary travel is wise, these restrictions may pose serious implications for Michigan and other northern border states, and could potentially hamper COVID-19 response efforts within our country's borders. We urge you to clarify the ramifications of this policy with our Canadian partners as soon as possible.

The Public Health Agency of Canada outlined exceptions to their policy for essential workers in the "trades and transportation sector," along with "health care providers and critical infrastructure workers."<sup>3</sup> These exceptions are of critical importance to Michigan, where thousands of workers from industries that rely on international trade such as manufacturing and agriculture, and health care employees and first responders, cross the U.S.-Canada border every day. In Michigan, it has been reported that approximately 950 employees from the Henry Ford Health System alone cross the border for work on a daily basis, and hundreds more work for the region's other major health care systems, including the Detroit Medical Center, Beaumont, and St. John Providence.<sup>4</sup> More broadly, it is estimated that 30,000 to 40,000 Canadians work in the U.S with nonimmigrant TN visas.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada: *Prime Minister announces new actions under Canada's COVID-19 response* (Mar. 16, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Transport Canada, *New measures for COVID-19 response* (Mar. 17, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> *No concerns about crossing Canada-U.S. border yet says health-care worker*, CBC News (Mar. 17, 2020) (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/windsor/canada-u-s-border-health-care-workers-1.5499962>); *Trump visa changes keep Canadian nurses from hospitals*, Detroit Free Press (Mar. 16, 2017) (<https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2017/03/16/trump-visa-changes-canadian-nurses/99260204/>).

<sup>5</sup> *Confusion, concern after specialized Canadian nurses turned back at U.S. border*, CBC News (Mar. 15, 2017) (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/windsor/canadian-nurses-working-in-us-rejected-1.4026554>).

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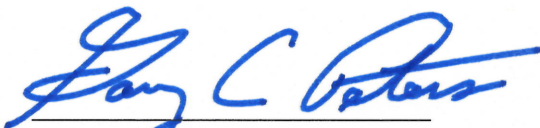
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We recognize that extraordinary measures must be taken to prevent the spread of the virus, and commend the efforts our Canadian partners are making to accomplish that goal. At the same time, we must monitor for any unintended consequences that could hinder our health care system's ability to respond to this crisis. Therefore, we urge your Administration to coordinate with Canadian authorities as soon as possible to answer the below questions and ensure that border crossings for critical response personnel are not impeded:

1. What coordination is occurring between the U.S. and Canadian governments to implement this travel restriction policy? How are you ensuring that critical response personnel can continue to cross the U.S.-Canada border?
2. Who determines what qualifies as "critical infrastructure"?
3. Who determines what qualifies as a "health care provider"?
4. What kind of credentialing is required to gain the ability to cross the border under the "health care provider" exemption?
5. Which U.S. agencies will work with Canada if they decide to make a change to the exemptions currently in place?
  - a. How will you ensure that U.S. hospitals and other healthcare facilities have enough time to adapt or make arrangements to house their workforce?
6. How is the Administration helping hospitals and other health care facilities prepare plans to adapt to the potential for more stringent border closures?

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator

cc:

The Honorable Michael Pompeo, Secretary, U.S. Department of State

The Honorable Chad Wolf, Acting Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security