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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

December 4, 2017

Kevin K. McAleenan
Acting Commissioner
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20229

Dear Mr. McAleenan:

I am writing regarding the urgent need to address staffing shortages at our nation's ports of entry.

As you know, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officers are responsible for inspecting all individuals and goods entering the United States at ports of entry across the country. Each day these officers act as the gatekeepers of our national security, and are in many cases the first line of defense in identifying illicit drugs entering the country.¹ CBP Officers are also responsible for identifying individuals who may pose national security threats and for preventing them from entering the country via land, sea, and air at 328 ports of entry across the United States.² In addition to detecting drugs, illicit materials, and unauthorized individuals at land border ports of entry and airports, CBP Officers are also responsible for screening at mail and cargo processing facilities across the United States. This role is particularly important given the rise of opioids such as fentanyl being sent via the postal service and other express carriers.³

Despite the critical role that CBP Officers play in protecting our national security and stopping the flow of illicit drugs into this country, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has failed to hire enough officers to staff the ports of entry adequately. CBP's workload staffing model for ports of entry is part of a "three-pronged strategy that maximizes existing resources, identifies... staffing needs, and explores funding sources to support our staffing needs."⁴ Since

¹ Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration, *2016 National Drug Threat Assessment Summary*, DEA-DCT-DIR-001-17 (www.dea.gov/resource-center/2016%20NDTA%20Summary.pdf) (Nov. 2016).

² Customs and Border Protection, *Snapshot: A Summary of CBP Facts and Figures* (June 2017) (www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/assets/documents/2017-Jun/CBP-Snapshot-06012017.pdf).

³ Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, *Hearing on Stopping the Shipment of Synthetic Opioids: Oversight of U.S. Strategy to Combat Illicit Drugs* 115th Cong. (May 25, 2016).

⁴ Customs and Border Protection, *Resource Optimization Strategy* (Mar. 7, 2017) (www.cbp.gov/border-security/ports-entry/resource-opt-strategy).

2014, this model has been updated periodically to include input on various technological advancements to determine the optimal number of staff needed at each port of entry.⁵ According to this model, to meet current staffing needs and to fully and adequately staff all ports of entry, CBP needs to hire approximately 3,600 officers.⁶

Despite this need demonstrated by internal CBP analysis, the DHS budget for FY 2018 proposed no additional funding for CBP Officers.⁷ The current understaffing by 3,600 officers has meant increased wait times at ports of entry for people and cargo, shorter inspection times for people and goods, as well as the repeated “temporary” assignments of CBP Officers to understaffed ports of entry.

To better understand how CBP is addressing the needs of all ports of entry, I request the following information:

1. What is the current number of CBP Officers employed by CBP, the number currently authorized, and the most recent number recommended by the workload staffing model? Please provide a current copy of the workload staffing model.
2. What is the current breakdown of staffing numbers by CBP Officer specialization? What is the current shortage for each specialization based on the workload staffing model?
3. Based on the workload staffing model, what is the current shortage of CBP Officers at ports of entry on the southern border and ports of entry on the northern border?
4. How many CBP Officers are currently on temporary details to ports of entry other than their regular duty station? How many temporary details have taken place each year for the past three years? Please provide the number of officers detailed, the duty stations that they are detailed away from, and the locations that they are detailed to.

⁵ Customs and Border Protection, *Report on Business Transformation Initiatives: Fiscal Year 2016 Report to Congress* (Sept. 23, 2016) (www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/assets/documents/2017-Jan/Report%20on%20Business%20Transformation%20Initiatives%20vFinal%209-23-2016.pdf).

⁶ Customs and Border Protection, Sen McCaskill, Ranking Member of HSGAC, request for information regarding hiring of CBPOs; CBP Response on 4 December 2017 (Dec. 4, 2017).

⁷ The President has also failed to direct any increase in CBP Officers. Earlier this year, the President ordered an increase of 10,000 additional Immigrations and Customs Enforcement agents and 5,000 additional Border Patrol agents. However, the President did not direct a commensurate expansion in the number of officers that secure our ports of entry, nor did his budget provide for any increase in their end strength. Exec. Order 13767m 82 Fed. Reg. 8793 (Jan. 25, 2017).

5. Please provide any reports or analyses that justify maintaining the current number of authorized CBP Officers, rather than the number of CBP Officers recommended under the workload planning model.
6. Please provide any reports or analyses that recommend that the number of CBP Officers should be increased, and describe any requests have you received from subordinates to increase the number CBP Officers.
7. Please provide a description of how the workload staffing model takes into account actual traffic flow at ports of entry and whether CBP employs any predictive analysis base on past traffic patterns or growth projections.

I request that you provide this information as soon as possible, but in no event later than December 26, 2017. In addition to this information, I request a briefing on the cost of hiring additional officers, the length of time needed to onboard these officers, and any other considerations, such as training or the need for accompanying support personnel, that would be helpful in understanding any challenges faced by CBP in meeting the workload staffing model goals.

If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Caitlin Warner of the Committee staff at Caitlin_Warner@hsgac.senate.gov. Please send any official correspondence to Caitlin_Warner@hsgac.senate.gov and Lucy_Balcezak@hsgac.senate.gov.

Sincerely,



Claire McCaskill
Ranking Member

cc: Ron Johnson
Chairman