

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

February 5, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

We write regarding your January 21, 2021, Executive Order on *Promoting COVID-19 Safety in Domestic and International Travel*, in which you gave select members of your Cabinet 14 days to submit a plan on the implementation of appropriate public health measures at land ports of entry.<sup>1</sup> As Members of the Michigan delegation, who represent a state with a major land border with Canada, relations with our neighbors to the North are important to many of the constituents we represent. As the Administration implements your Executive Order, we urge you to use the information from the report submitted by the Secretaries of State, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, and the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to provide relief for families separated by border restrictions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. While we all hope to resume non-essential travel across the border soon, we believe that the reunification of these families should be considered a priority for this report.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, many Michigan families have been unable to see their loved ones.<sup>2</sup> Beginning March 18, 2020, the Canadian government announced measures to close its borders to foreign nationals, and the United States quickly enacted similar restrictions at land ports of entry along the United States-Canada border on March 20. These restrictions have been reviewed and extended every thirty days since in accordance with COVID-19 safety protocols, including as recently as January 19, 2021.<sup>3</sup> The closure of the Canadian border has separated siblings, parents, grandparents, cousins, and unmarried partners who frequently make the short trip across the Ambassador Bridge or through the Detroit-Canada Tunnel to visit their loved ones.<sup>4</sup> As we approach the one-year mark of the pandemic, many of the travel restrictions implemented at the beginning of the public health emergency have proven especially difficult for those who are cut off from those closest to them.

On June 8, 2020, Canada graciously extended the first exemption to their border travel restrictions, granting those who are immediate family members the right to cross into Canada, and on October 8, 2020, they established a second set of exemptions for extended family members.<sup>5</sup> <sup>6</sup> However, the Trump Administration did not reciprocate those exemptions, prohibiting certain Canadian travelers from crossing into the United

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<sup>1</sup> The White House. (January 21, 2021). *Executive Order on Promoting COVID-19 Safety in Domestic and International Travel*.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/21/executive-order-promoting-covid-19-safety-in-domestic-and-international-travel/>

<sup>2</sup> Fox 2. (January 2, 2021). *Travel restrictions between the U.S. and Canada separate couple for 10 months*. <http://www.fox2detroit.com/news/travel-restrictions-between-the-u-s-and-canada-separate-couple-for-10-months>

<sup>3</sup> Department of Homeland Security. (October 19, 2020). *Fact Sheet: DHS Measures on the Border to Limit the Further Spread of Coronavirus*.

<https://www.dhs.gov/news/2020/10/19/fact-sheet-dhs-measures-border-limit-further-spread-coronavirus>

<sup>4</sup> The Sault News. (January 26, 2021). *International Border remains closed, citizens call for action from U.S. government*.

<http://www.sooeveningnews.com/news/20210126/international-border-remains-closed-citizens-call-for-action-from-us-government>

<sup>5</sup> Government of Canada. (August 30, 2020). Order in Council Division. <https://orders-in-council.canada.ca/attachment.php?attach=39612>

<sup>6</sup> Government of Canada. (October 30, 2020). Order in Council Division. <https://orders-in-council.canada.ca/attachment.php?attach=39828>

States by land.<sup>7</sup> As a first step, we urge the Department of Homeland Security to reciprocate those exemptions and allow for Canadians to visit immediate and extended family in the United States, as well as provide them the opportunity to care for loved ones who may be ill, attend funeral and memorial services, and more. We believe this action can be taken immediately and would resolve the disparity between U.S. and Canadian policies while government officials work to establish formal procedures to safely reopen the land border.

It is important to note that in any proposed policy, all family travel exemptions should and must remain in line with federal, state, and local COVID-19 health guidelines and quarantine procedures. We want to be clear that these exemptions should not come at the expense of public health; our top priority must remain limiting the spread of COVID-19. However, we believe that reciprocating these family travel exemptions are an important first step toward fully reopening our borders in a safe manner.

We appreciate your efforts to assist separated families and are eager to work with you on a safe and science-based approach to reopen our northern border.

Sincerely,



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Brenda L. Lawrence (MI-14)  
Member of Congress



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Andy Levin (MI-09)  
Member of Congress



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Haley M. Stevens (MI-11)  
Member of Congress



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Rashida Tlaib (MI-13)  
Member of Congress

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<sup>7</sup> Federal Register. (March 24, 2020). *Notification of Temporary Travel Restrictions Applicable to Land Ports of Entry and Ferries Service Between the United States and Canada*. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/03/24/2020-06217/notification-of-temporary-travel-restrictions-applicable-to-land-ports-of-entry-and-ferries-service>