

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 28, 2019

The Honorable Kevin McAleenan
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20016

Dear Acting Secretary McAleenan:

We write to express our concerns regarding the reassignment of Transportation and Security Administration (TSA) agents to our southern border. Press reports indicate that reassigned staff will include 175 law enforcement officials, including air marshals, and as many as 400 security staff.¹

Every day, TSA is responsible for ensuring the security of approximately two million passengers traveling aboard over 22,000 international and domestic flights.² TSA plays a critical role in protecting our national security and maintaining an essential part of the U.S. economy. Significant resources are needed to fulfill these responsibilities and in recent years further investments and improvements have been identified. Rather than make these necessary improvements, we are concerned the administration's decision to reassign agents may undermine TSA's security operations. TSA officials have acknowledged that moving agents to work on our southern border carries risk to our national security, a risk that is further heightened by choosing to reassign agents just before the summer's busy travel season.³ Airport officials have reiterated this concern, arguing that such a move could hinder their security operations.⁴ Taking TSA agents away from their mission depletes resources from a critical national security agency that must focus on staying ahead of the dynamic threat to aviation.

We acknowledge the recent increase in families and unaccompanied minors crossing the border has created extremely difficult conditions and strained resources for Border Patrol personnel. However, the administration's misguided approach has only exacerbated these problems at our southern border. Instead of approaching the humanitarian crisis in Central America with a holistic strategy that addresses the root causes driving women and children away from their homes, President Trump recently said he intends to cut previously-approved funding for aid to El

¹ Marsh, Rene and Wallace, Gregory. "TSA to deploy hundreds, including air marshals, to border." *CNN* (May 15, 2019), <https://www.cnn.com/2019/05/15/politics/tsa-border-security/index.html>.

² TSA by the Numbers, Factsheet, https://www.tsa.gov/sites/default/files/resources/tsabythenumbers_factsheet.pdf.

³ Marsh, Rene and Wallace, Gregory. "TSA to deploy hundreds, including air marshals, to border." *CNN* (May 15, 2019), <https://www.cnn.com/2019/05/15/politics/tsa-border-security/index.html>.

⁴ Associated Press, "Lawmakers clash over plan for TSA staff," *The Columbian* (May 21, 2019), <https://www.columbian.com/news/2019/may/21/lawmakers-clash-over-plan-for-tsa-staff/>.

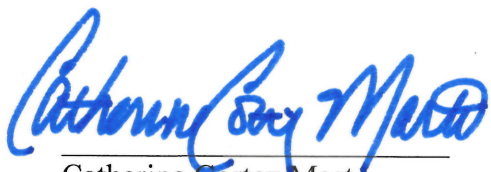
Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.⁵ Instead, Congress is ready to work with the administration to provide conditional assistance to Central American governments, enhance processing of asylum seekers, strengthen refugee resettlement programs in the region, and hire additional immigration judges to process the backlog of cases in our immigration court.

We urge you to reconsider the decision to reassign TSA agents to work with Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) along the southern border. Given the short window of time in which the administration plans to implement this policy and the insufficient level of information provided to the public about this decision, we respectfully request that you provide answers to the following questions within 30 days. We also request that you provide a briefing to Senators on the current Department of Homeland Security personnel at the border.

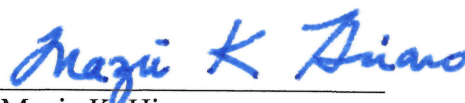
1. Which TSA officials will be eligible to be reassigned to the southern border?
 - a. Please provide a list of the number of agents reassigned, including corresponding job titles and the cities in which they work.
2. Are additional efforts being taken to ensure TSA will be adequately prepared to handle the high volume of travelers expected this summer? If so, please describe those efforts in detail.
3. What specific training will CBP provide to TSA agents?
 - a. Please describe the child and family welfare training that TSA agents will receive.

We appreciate your prompt attention to this matter and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



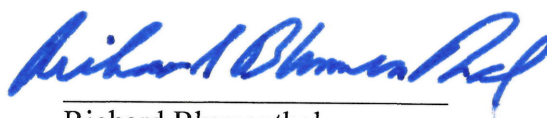
Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

⁵ Hudson, John and DeYoung, Karen. "Trump's aid cuts to Central America still undetermined despite announcement." *The Washington Post* (April 9, 2019), https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/trumps-aid-cuts-to-central-america-still-undetermined-despite-announcement/2019/04/09/ff468967-6b7d-4e25-b619-99e520e4535e_story.html?utm_term=.eea4af3ca42a.

Patty Murray

Patty Murray
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Jacky Rosen

Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator