

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 19, 2022

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

The Honorable Susan E. Rice
Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Secretaries Blinken and Mayorkas and Ambassador Rice:

We are writing to urge the development of a comprehensive plan for how your departments will handle the increased numbers of individuals and families who will be arriving at our nation's southern border – *ahead* of any lifting of the Title 42 order. At this point, generations of Democrats and Republicans in the White House and in Congress have failed to provide the laws and policies needed to properly handle immigration in this country. While you inherited this problem, it is now your responsibility – with necessary help from Congress – to address our broken immigration system. Given our backgrounds in national security, we know the Executive Branch is accustomed to planning for contingencies, and it is for this reason that we submit to you the below requests for actions to be taken before the administration lifts the Title 42 order, so that we prevent a humanitarian and security crisis.

According to public statements, when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lifts the Title 42 order, currently slated to occur on May 23, 2022, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is expecting that up to 18,000 people per day will require short-term holding for processing and transfer. This number would more than double the current rate, which exceeds 7,000 people per day, and would well exceed the DHS's stated operational capacity of 5,000 people per day. We are concerned about how DHS will contend with an increase of people – including children and families – that will more than triple the department's capacity without ample and robust planning. And while the administration gave itself two months to prepare, what has been shared with us to date seems like too little, too late – especially when the removal of Title 42 will occur at the same time that a spike in seasonal migration occurs.

Instead, we urge you to do three things, in collaboration with Congress, to help prevent the looming humanitarian and security crisis:

First, delay lifting Title 42 until you have a plan in place to address the inevitable migration surge. This plan should include details on how DHS will support robust border security in the face of growing numbers of migrants, while also maintaining the dignity of those arriving at our

border in search of a better life. We request that your agency share with Congress detailed plans that address the Department's staffing, technological, and humanitarian support requirements to handle expected encounters, as well as the funding proposal necessary to make such preparations. To this end, we recently introduced the H.R.6794 Integrating New Technologies to Empower Law Enforcement (INTEL) at Our Borders Act, which would identify potential technological shortfalls with our border security.

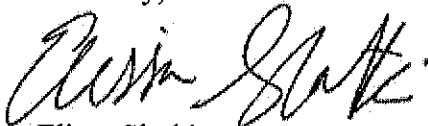
Second, institute in-country immigration processing in Central America. We welcome your leadership on solving this decades-long crisis. Increasing options for legal immigration, particularly for those looking to legally work in the U.S., helps free up resources at the border needed for legitimate asylum seekers. We urge you to think creatively about the tools you have available to you – like issuing the maximum allowable work visas and expanding in-country processing – and to provide Congress with your vision for any legislative fixes you need. By taking a whole of government approach, surging personnel from the State Department and Commerce, not just Customs and Border Patrol, we can make applying for legal status from outside of the United States a safe and viable option. Otherwise, the migrants, simply seeking a better life for their families, will continue to trek more than 1,000 miles and pay thousands of dollars per person to dangerous cartels and human smugglers.

Lastly, we need to plan for continued migration surges. We should be treating migration surges similarly to how we treat natural disasters: as events that will ebb and flow with world events and that demand a swift, coordinated response. We are ready to work with you on a plan where we can prepare for expected contingencies instead of being overwhelmed over many years and many administrations. We should move forward in a manner that ensures we are protecting our borders, securing our ports of entry, and recognizing the dignity of migrants.

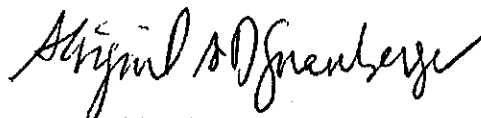
Planning for the eventual lifting of the Title 42 order presents the State Department, DHS, Congress, and other agencies with a clear mandate to improve upon a broken immigration system. We need to plan for the impact of increased migration, implement creative and safer strategies to process would-be migrants, and protect the economic interests of our country and hemisphere. We urge you to use the tools you have at your disposal to mitigate a potential humanitarian crisis on our southern border, and we, in turn, commit to doing whatever we can to get Congress to work as a partner on such a plan.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Elissa Slotkin
Member of Congress



Abigail Spanberger
Member of Congress