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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0308

March 8, 2021

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

Dear Secretary Mayorkas,

As the representative of Arizona's 8th Congressional District, I am writing to request a briefing on the actions you plan to take to address the ongoing and growing crisis at our nation's southern border.

Our nation's immigration policy has undergone significant change during the Biden Administration's first 100 days. Instead of enforcing existing immigration law, the administration's actions and rhetoric are fueling the burgeoning migrant crisis. According to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), 117,000 unaccompanied alien children (UAC) are estimated to cross the border in 2021. In January 2021 alone, the number of UAC and total apprehensions more than doubled from January 2020.

I am extremely concerned that several recent decisions will exacerbate the current border crisis:

1. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) changed its policy and began releasing detained parents and children into the United States, raising substantial concerns because prior large-scale releases of illegal aliens have, "triggered previous waves of unauthorized migration."¹
2. DHS ended the Migrant Protection Protocols and allowed asylum seekers to enter the country regardless of whether their cases were approved. At the same time, you announced that further migrants should wait until processing capacity was improved, a contradiction that only leads to more uncertainty along the southern border.²

¹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/mexico-has-stopped-accepting-central-american-families-expelled-by-us-along-the-border/2021/02/03/39da9828-6650-11eb-bf81-c618c88ed605_story.html

² <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-biden-immigration-asylum/biden-to-bring-in-asylum-seekers-forced-to-wait-in-mexico-under-trump-program-idUSKBN2AC113>

3. The Department of State suspended the United States' "Asylum Cooperative Agreements" with Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, yet Secretary of State Antony Blinken asserted that this decision does not, "mean that the U.S. border is open."³

The combination of abrupt policy changes and contradictory statements of policy from DHS and other members of the Biden Administration only add to the confusion. The result is more incentives for migrants to make the arduous journey to enter the country while the administration seeks to assure the American people that the changes in policy and rhetoric are not contributing to the border crisis.⁴

In a recent meeting with White House officials, Yuma, Arizona Mayor Douglas Nicholls' ultimate ask was for the Biden Administration to reconsider its policies on releases.⁵ However, President Biden has proposed policies that will do nothing but add fuel to the growing crisis.

The Biden Administration proposal to provide a pathway to citizenship will only encourage more people to enter the country illegally and is a disservice to the many legal immigrants in our country who are following the law. This border crisis requires actual acknowledgement by DHS and the development of thoughtful and timely solutions to improve our nation's border security.

I look forward to meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss and effectively address the ongoing border crisis.

Sincerely,



Debbie Lesko
Member of Congress

³ <https://www.npr.org/2021/02/06/964907437/biden-moves-to-end-trump-era-asylum-agreements-with-central-american-countries>

⁴ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/press-briefings/2021/03/05/press-briefing-by-press-secretary-jen-psaki-march-5-2021/>

⁵ <https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/politics/border-issues/2021/03/04/yuma-mayor-meets-white-house-over-migrant-releases-az-border/6913481002/>