

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 30, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas  
Department of Homeland Security  
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave., SE  
Washington, DC 20528

Dear President Biden and Secretary Mayorkas:

We write to you with a sense of urgency regarding the escalating situation at our southern border. In doing so, we hope to demonstrate that this bicameral concern is neither partisan nor political. To solve the growing problem, we request a special executive appointment for border issues to ensure sufficient federal resources are allocated to overburdened U.S. border communities, and to recommend changes to our immigration policies as we work to regain control of the border.

As you know, Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”) facilities and personnel are overwhelmed by the growing surge of migrants, many of whom are unaccompanied children. We know this current influx is neither seasonal nor temporary. In June, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (“CBP”) recorded 188,829 enforcement encounters at the southwest land border, the highest monthly total in a decade.<sup>1</sup> This represents a 571% increase over the 33,049 encounters recorded by CBP in June 2020.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, in 2021 alone, these numbers have increased by 255% from the 74,019 encounters recorded in December 2020.<sup>3</sup> The total number of migrants apprehended at the southern border has exceeded 1.2 million this fiscal year. In short, this is a humanitarian and public safety emergency.

As the U.S. endeavors to fully suppress the COVID-19 pandemic and navigate the challenges associated with the spread of the Delta variant, Americans living near the southern border are now vulnerable to additional public health risks. In Texas’ Rio Grande Valley, where CBP had over 20,000 enforcement encounters last week, Border Patrol agents are testing positive for COVID-19 at alarming rates. Widespread reports from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (“ICE”) officials have confirmed they are beyond departmental capacity, requiring the release of approximately 50,000 migrants into U.S. communities without any court order.<sup>4</sup> The situation on the border will worsen unless we enact policies that will end the surge and fix our broken immigration system.

Therefore, we request that you immediately create a special executive position vested with the authority to implement federal policies which prioritize the health and safety of U.S. communities at the southern border. Former DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson carries an exceptional bipartisan reputation for pragmatic approaches to complex border security and immigration challenges. In 2014, he coordinated a thoughtful U.S. response to a migration influx event and prioritized certain eligible cases for immediate removal. He also established innovative public health protocols which minimized risks to Americans from foreign travelers during the largest Ebola epidemic in history.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Customs and Border Protection, USBP and OFO official month end reporting for FY21 to date.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*, USBP and OFO official year end reporting for FY18-FY21.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> Axios, “50,000 migrants released; few report to ICE,” (Retrieved July 29, 2021).

We strongly support the appointment of someone with the unique credentials of former Secretary Johnson to this position.

Thank you for your immediate consideration of this important request. We are optimistic that the escalating situation at our southern border can be managed by working with your Administration in earnest and in the interests of all Americans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Henry Cuellar". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "H".

Henry Cuellar  
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lindsey O. Graham". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L".

Lindsey O. Graham  
United States Senator