February 8, 2021

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

Secretary Pete Buttigieg
U.S. Department of Transportation
Washington, D.C. 20528

Re: CONTINUED DISCRIMINATION AGAINST BORDER COMMUNITIES - ARBITRARY LAND-BORDER TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

Dear Secretary Mayorkas and Secretary Buttigieg:

Congratulations on your historic confirmations. As you “hit the ground running,” we would like to address The President’s direction to, within 14 days, “implement CDC guidelines consistent with applicable law, and take into account the operational considerations relevant to the different populations who enter the United States by land.” One of those populations entering by land are Mexican tourist visa holders.

We ask for your help to lift the land border restrictions against tourist visa holders.

American border cities like San Diego CA, Nogales AZ, Douglas AZ, Laredo TX and El Paso TX cannot begin economic recovery until the arbitrary, one-way restrictions placed on lawfully permitted tourist visa holders is lifted. In San Ysidro alone, we have gone from $895M in retail sales to an expected $225M for 2020. Again, this is not economy over health. The arbitrary border restrictions have been proven to have no impact on COVID spread. The County of San Diego, Health and Human Services has – for six months now – operated a free testing facility at the busiest US/MX land border crossing. The positive infection rates HAVE NEVER been higher at the border crossing than the rest of south San Diego County! Additionally, of those infected, only 16% had Mexican addresses. In fact, no positive rates anywhere along the border have been reported to be any higher than their surrounding communities.

The current, arbitrary land border restrictions have nothing to do with health. In fact, this practice is discriminatory. These restrictions and those who support them are discriminating against Mexican tourist visa holders (whose DNA does not make them any more susceptible to COVID than his/her American-born neighbor). These restrictions, and those who support them, are discriminating against border communities – as cargo was never touched, national companies are fine since their Toyotas, TV’s and other binationally produced products continue to flow. Regional companies are fine because their workforce continues to cross. Border communities are those that rely – economically, socially, and yes, health wise – on the daily and essential travel of tourist visa holders.
We ask for your help to lift the land border restrictions against tourist visa holders.

Restricting daily travelers between our countries, who invest in binational commerce through the goods and services they acquire, is hurting border communities more than COVID itself.

Sincerely,
US border community chambers of commerce:

Jason M-B Wells  Isabel Georgelos  Miguel Conchas
San Ysidro Chamber of Commerce  Tucson Hispanic CoC  Laredo Chamber of Commerce
San Ysidro, CA  Tucson, AZ  Laredo, TX

Alejandra Mier y Teran  Blanca Larson  William W. Davis, President
Otay Mesa Chamber of Commerce  Del Rio Chamber of Commerce  Eagle Pass Chamber of Commerce
Otay Mesa, CA  Del Rio, TX  Eagle Pass, TX

Kaite B. Luna  Steve Ahlenius  Dafne Maldonado
Brawley Chamber of Commerce  McAllen Chamber of Commerce  San Benito County CoC
Brawley, CA  McAllen, TX  San Benito County, TX

David Jerome
El Paso Chamber of Commerce
El Paso, TX