

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

April 9, 2020

The Honorable Chad Wolf  
Acting Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Mark A. Morgan  
Acting Commissioner  
U.S. Customs and Border Protection  
Washington, DC 20229

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf and Acting Commissioner Morgan,

We write to express our concern regarding working conditions for U.S. Customs and Border Protection Officers (CBPOs) along our southern border, specifically in the Rio Grande Valley. CBPOs are performing critical duties to ensure the flow of essential traffic through our ports of entry. Their safety and well-being are always of paramount importance, but especially now as they continue to work through the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) must ensure that safety measures are in place, not only for the protection of our officers, but also for the protection of the general public. Safety protocols for CBPOs and for travelers crossing into the United State through our ports of entry is critical to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

We are concerned to learn that CBPOs in the Rio Grande Valley are not uniformly provided or wearing personal protective equipment and that temperature checks have not been implemented for the protection of CBPOs or to gain a greater understanding of symptomatic travelers entering the United States. On April 5, 2020, CBP reported that 160 of its employees had tested positive for COVID-19. Just this past week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended that all Americans wear face coverings. CBPOs are a part of our frontline personnel and they must be equipped with essential equipment that will mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and ensure their safety.

Concerns of community spread and reduced flow through our ports of entry led CBP to revise schedules and use weather and safety leave to reduce staffing at ports of entry. This change rightfully allowed CBPOs to maintain a safe social distance and thereby mitigate their exposure to asymptomatic carrier transmission of COVID-19. CBP's sudden cancellation of weather and safety leave, reportedly to respond to a potential influx of COVID-19 migrants, is neither grounded in evidence nor facts and endangers the health of CBPOs.

Due to these safety concerns, we write to inquire about the procedures DHS and CBP have put in place to ensure the safety of travelers and CBPOs. Please provide us with answers to the following questions:

1. Has DHS or CBP implemented temperature checks for travelers or CBPOs at ports of entry?
2. Has DHS or CBP secured testing kits for CBP personnel at local ports of entry?
3. Do DHS and CBP have sufficient personal protective equipment in a variety of sizes to equip their personnel during work hours for all shifts?
4. What guidelines have been issued to personnel and implemented to ensure the proper use of personal protective equipment?
5. What guidelines have been issued to personnel and implemented to maintain appropriate social distancing?
6. Without the use of weather and safety leave, how will DHS and CBP ensure appropriate social distancing is implemented?
7. What guidelines have been issued to pedestrians and implemented to maintain appropriate social distancing?

We appreciate your attention to these critical matters and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



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Filemon Vela  
Member of Congress



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Bennie G. Thompson  
Chairman  
Committee on Homeland Security