



April 3, 2019

The Honorable Gary Peters
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Peters:

On behalf of Airports Council International—North America (ACI-NA) – which represents local, regional, and state governing bodies that own and operate commercial airports throughout the United States and Canada – I am writing in strong support of your new legislation, the Securing America’s Ports of Entry Act, that would increase the authorized number of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers by 600 annually to help the agency meet its current and future staffing needs.

With CBP’s workforce staffing model still showing a deficit of over 2000 CBP officers, airports greatly appreciate your efforts to ensure that CBP has sufficient staffing to address lengthy wait times and new air service opportunities in communities across the country. Insufficient CBP staffing routinely results in long passenger wait times and missed flight connections, thereby discouraging international travelers, who spend an average of \$4,200 per visit, from traveling to the United States. These staffing problems will only worsen as CBP tries to fulfill the biometric entry-exit requirements imposed by Congress. On top of that, chronic staffing shortfalls threaten existing and new air service for many local communities, even though air passengers pay for the service through a number of federal user fees. Unfortunately, in just the past few years CBP has denied landing rights to new international service at many airports due to inadequate staffing levels.

Additionally, airports appreciate your effort to provide greater transparency and accountability to CBP’s increasing reliance on reimbursable services agreements and temporary duty assignments to

cover its system-wide staffing shortfalls. Over the past decade airports and airlines have made significant investments of their own resources to fund officers and overtime costs through reimbursable agreements and to fund technological solutions – such as Automated Passport Control kiosks and Mobile Passport Control via smartphones – to address CBP staffing shortages and reduce passenger wait times. These partnerships, anticipated as temporary measures to provide CBP time to right size its workforce, have become routine requests of the agency. Meanwhile, there is increasing pressure on CBP to reassign hundreds of officers from airports to land ports-of-entry along the southern border, as has been done in the past, which would negatively impact air passengers who already pay CBP user fees to help offset the cost of CBP operations at air ports-of-entry. Congress – as well as aviation passengers, customers, and stakeholders – deserve a greater understanding of CBP’s motives, justifications, and outcomes in the use of reimbursable services agreements and temporary duty assignments.

Thank you for your leadership on these important issues. Please let me know if we can be of any assistance to your efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin M. Burke". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kevin" and last name "Burke" clearly legible.

Kevin M. Burke
President and CEO
ACI-NA