

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

August 3, 2021

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
301 7th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

We write to request an emergency exception to the restrictions on travel from Canada across the U.S.-Canada border to permit access to the exclave community of Point Roberts in Washington state. Since March of 2020, the U.S.-Canada border has been closed to non-essential land travel. Canada has announced restrictions will be eased on August 9, 2021 while the United States has announced an extension of its border restrictions through August 21, 2021 at a minimum.

Point Roberts is an isolated town located at the northwest corner of Whatcom County, WA with roughly 1,100 annual residents and an additional 4,000 part-time residents. These residents typically access the mainland United States by car through Canada. The non-essential border closure has had dramatic and severe effects on our constituents living in Point Roberts and the Canadians who own homes there. The border closure has made land travel unreliable at best and impossible at worse. As a result, the border closure rendered Point Roberts an island that is almost exclusively accessible via twice-a-week ferry service, a service that is terminating on August 12<sup>th</sup>.

Cross-border commerce is the lifeblood of this community and after more than sixteen months, many businesses are on the brink of shutting their doors for good. According to the Point Roberts Chamber of Commerce, approximately 85% of the community's commercial activity is tied to retail spending by Canadian visitors. By comparison, Western Washington University's Border Policy Research Institute (BPRI) found that Canadians only accounted for 12% of taxable retail sales in other small border cities in Whatcom County. BPRI also found in a September 2020 survey that Point Roberts-based businesses were forced to reduced their number of full-time equivalent positions by 72% in aggregate and that 83% of surveyed firms had witnessed their monthly revenues decrease by 50% or more. Without revenue from Canadian visitors during the summer, Point Roberts' businesses will face even greater financial hardship during the winter. Point Roberts' economy is on the precipice.

We appreciate and are grateful for the Administration's science-based approach to the COVID-19 pandemic. But we also appreciate that sound science is based upon evidence. And we firmly believe that the evidence supports a narrow and tailored exception to the Administration's Canadian border closure and a reopening of the Point Roberts port of entry to Canadian travel. Such an exception is defensible on the basis of Point Roberts' unique geographic isolation and

economic devastation and in no way undermines the Administration's border policy: no other community the size of Point Roberts is located in an exclave along the Canadian border.

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, the residents of Point Roberts have been asked to forego their family, their friends, and in far too many cases, their livelihoods. The current border closure policy is now asking them to give up the very community that they have struggled to sustain. We find that unconscionable.

We emphatically urge you to act swiftly and to save Point Roberts from further injury.

Sincerely,



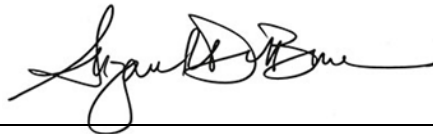
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Patty Murray  
United States Senator



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Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



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Suzan DelBene  
Member of Congress