

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 15, 2024

The Honorable Chris Murphy  
Chairman, Subcommittee on  
Homeland Security

128 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Katie Britt  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on  
Homeland Security

B-40A Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Murphy and Ranking Member Britt:

We look forward to working with you in your leadership roles on the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security. As senators representing states along the U.S.-Canada border, we write to express our support for including in the fiscal year (FY) 2025 Homeland Security appropriations legislation, the necessary resources to properly staff and secure our northern border. We urge your continued attention to northern border security, and thank you for your attention to this matter of importance to both our individual states and the nation.

We support ensuring that our border professionals have the personnel, technology, and tools necessary to secure our nation's borders. In doing so, it is important that the Federal government effectively carry out its responsibility to safely and effectively secure both of our northern and southern borders. This is particularly important due to the increased activity at the southern border over the past several years which has necessitated the reallocation of personnel and resources, including technology, from our border with Canada. At the same time as the increased activity at the southern border, in FY23 the northern border experienced 189,000 land encounters at and between ports of entry, a 73% increase from 2022 and a 597% increase from 2021.

CBP officers and U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) agents have the critical mission of protecting the American people by securing our borders. Succeeding at this mission involves sacrifice by these officers and agents as well as their families. We should ensure that these border security professionals have the resources needed to adequately staff the northern border. Out of a need to assist along the U.S.-Mexico border, CBP officers and USBP agents continue to be transferred from the northern border. These continual temporary duty assignments take a significant toll on officers and agents as well as families assigned to northern border duties. We encourage this subcommittee to provide the necessary resources to ensure personnel on the northern border can fulfill their mission without the frequent need for temporary duty assignments.

Recruitment and retention of CBP officers and USBP agents continues to prove challenging, particularly when attempting to fill posts along the northern border. We therefore urge the subcommittee to include the necessary resources to recruit and retain personnel, including resources for creative solutions to incentivize officers and agents to fill posts on the northern border.

Investments in technology along the northern border are critical, as technology can play a role in helping monitor our northern border in a way that will allow better prioritization of staffing needs as well as provide more situational awareness. Technology plays a critical role in the security of the northern border, especially given the remoteness of many areas. A majority of the northern border continues to be monitored with systems that must be manually operated, requiring consistent staffing to ensure full situational awareness. Investing in technology that allows agents to patrol and more quickly respond to activity is a much-needed investment, particularly given the recruitment and retention challenges faced by USBP.

We appreciate this subcommittee's funding of autonomous surveillance towers, which have proven to be a successful tool at monitoring activity, and we strongly support continued efforts to provide funding for the Autonomous Surveillance Tower (AST) program of record to increase deployments along the southern and northern borders. ASTs increase CBP's situational awareness of remote parts of the border, thereby improving agents' ability to safely and timely assist people in distress as well as respond to dangerous activity. In addition to the southern border deployments, Cold Weather ASTs have been deployed along the northern border in the Swanton Sector (1), including Vermont and New York, and the Havre Sector (2), covering Montana. The two Cold Weather ASTs currently deployed leverage autonomy to identify items of interest, such as people and vehicles, which allows border professionals to more effectively and efficiently utilize its manpower to perform its critical security and humanitarian missions. In addition, the Cold Weather ASTs have demonstrated success of operation in very cold temperatures. We therefore encourage the subcommittee to continue funding the AST program of record to ensure that additional towers that can be placed strategically along the northern border.

Finally, essential to both the security of our northern border and to ensuring the smooth flow of people and goods, is having ports of entry open to accommodate lawful travel between the United States and Canada. Hours at northern border ports of entry were reduced with the dramatic decrease in travel seen at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the end of the public health emergency, the subcommittee should ensure that CBP has the necessary resources to resume pre-pandemic operating hours at northern border ports of entry, and encourage the resumption of normal operating hours.

We appreciate the subcommittee's attention to these important issues along our northern border and we look forward to working with you as the FY2025 appropriations process advances. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



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John Hoeven  
United States Senator



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Jon Tester  
United States Senator



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Kevin Cramer  
United States Senator



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Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator



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Steven Daines  
United States Senator



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Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator



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Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



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Peter Welch  
United States Senator



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Gary Peters  
United States Senator



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Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senator