

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

June 13, 2018

The Honorable Kevin K. McAleenan  
Commissioner  
U.S. Customs and Border Protection  
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20229

Dear Commissioner McAleenan:

Congratulations on your recent confirmation and thank you for your commitment to protecting our nation in an increasingly globalized world. Each day, the men and women at Customs and Border Protection (CBP) put their lives on the line to stop criminal enterprise and prevent entry to those seeking to do harm. For international destinations like Orlando, Florida, these efforts are essential to our security and thriving economy.

Orlando International Airport (MCO) is the third fastest growing airport in the United States, and the busiest airport in Florida. International passenger volume has increased at an even faster pace, with an 89% increase from 2009 to 2016. However, CBP staffing has continued to remain flat at the airport's two Federal Inspection Stations (FIS). Even with the maximum number of personnel in these facilities, the arrivals hall quickly overflows during peak times, forcing passengers to remain on aircrafts until previous arrivals have cleared Customs and Immigration. These personnel shortages are especially felt during the peak summer travel season.

Similarly, Port Canaveral, located on Florida's east coast, is a key gateway to the region and the second busiest cruise embarkation port in the world. In 2017, Port Canaveral welcomed more than 4.5 million passengers, a 7% increase over the previous year. Still, CBP staffing has decreased through attrition, resulting in significant bottlenecks for Customs and Immigration inspections and increasing overtime for existing officers.

As you know, CBP officers at our nation's air, land, and seaports are on the frontline, protecting our nation from terrorists, international crime syndicates, and illegal drug smuggling. At New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport, CBP officers helped foil a 2007 plot targeting the airport, fuel tanks, and pipelines, which could have killed several thousand people and destroyed a significant portion of New York's Queens borough. In 2010, CBP officers identified and detained attempted Times Square bomber, Faisal Shahzad, before he could leave the United States and escape justice. And, at Orlando International Airport and Port Canaveral, officers have intercepted and seized countless amounts of illegal drugs like cocaine, heroin, and fentanyl, which are easily concealed and bring their international smugglers significant financial gain.

The threats at our nation's ports of entry are real, and, if carried out, could have permanent devastating effects on our nation and cities like Orlando. Therefore, we encourage your agency to prioritize and fulfill the scientifically based CBP officer-working model for our nation's ports of entry.

Earlier this year, after our urging, CBP Field Operations drew back and ultimately halted Temporary Duty Assignments (TDY) the Orlando Port Area. We respectfully request that you continue to suspend TDY assignments for CBP officers serving the region and not issue any further assignments until the agency can address critical staffing shortages at Orlando International Airport and Port Canaveral.

Thank you again for your commitment to our nation's security and economy. We invite you to visit the Orlando International Airport and Port Canaveral to learn how important CBP officer staffing levels are to our continued growth and safety.

Sincerely,

  

Val Butler Demings  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Bill Nelson  
UNITED STATES SENATOR

Marco Rubio  
UNITED STATES SENATOR



Stephanie Murphy  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Darren Soto  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS