

January 9th, 2023

President Joe Biden
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear President Biden and Secretary Mayorkas,

As state legislators for the northwesternmost corner of the contiguous United States, we deeply appreciate your work to keep our communities safe and our economy growing. We write to you to raise your attention to the continued challenges faced by communities on the Canadian border, the consequences of current border restrictions that our country has in place with Canada, and the need to allow Canadians to use land borders to enter the United States regardless of their vaccination status.

This past fall, on October 1st, 2022, Canada removed its remaining COVID restrictions at the border, allowing Americans to enter Canada regardless of their vaccination status. The United States has not yet reciprocated that move, and unvaccinated Canadians are currently unable to cross the land border and enter the U.S.

We believe that COVID vaccination is important for keeping people healthy, and that Americans and Canadians alike should listen to their doctors and get their vaccines and booster shots, but a requirement for vaccination to cross the border no longer makes sense. COVID is endemic in both our countries at this point, Canada's COVID case rate (3 per 100,000) is currently far lower than the United States' (18 per 100,000), and President Biden has stated himself that "the pandemic is over." This border restriction is providing no protection to communities in either country.

While this restriction carries no public health benefit, it comes at a great economic and social cost to our border communities. Canadians spent \$140 million in this area in 2018, or 11.5% of Whatcom County's taxable retail sales. American small businesses are missing out on money from Canadian visitors who are unable to travel here to shop. Many families and social networks live on either side of the border from each other, and border restrictions have carried a heavy toll on them and their ability to see their friends and family in person.

The consequences are even higher for Point Roberts, a small peninsula that is inaccessible from the rest of the United States by land – the only land connection from Point Roberts to the rest of our country goes through Canada. With a population of just around 1,200 people, Point Roberts inevitably relies on Canadians to provide essential services, and its residents are the U.S. citizens most heavily impacted by the border restrictions with Canada that have been in place since the beginning of the pandemic. We've heard from our constituents in Point Roberts that they can't get a plumber to fix their pipes or an HVAC technician to work on their homes or businesses because they need people from Canada to cross the border and do that work. They need to be able to count on getting help from Canadian workers to keep their community thriving, and that includes unvaccinated Canadians at times.

The vaccine requirement to cross the border was well-intentioned and appropriate earlier in the pandemic, but at this point it is no longer providing a public health benefit and it's causing great harm to our border communities. It hurts families who are divided by the border, and businesses who rely on having workers and shoppers cross.

We ask you to listen to our country's border communities and reciprocate Canada's actions by removing the vaccination requirement for Canadians to cross the land border and enter the United States.

Sincerely,



Senator Sharon Shewmake
42nd Legislative District



Representative Alicia Rule
42nd Legislative District, Position 1



Representative Joe Timmons
42nd Legislative District, Position 2

CC:

The Honorable Patty Murray, U.S. Senator
The Honorable Maria Cantwell, U.S. Senator
The Honorable Rick Larsen, U.S. Representative, 2nd District