

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 4, 2021

The Honorable Kamala D. Harris
Vice President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Madam Vice President:

We write in advance of your travel to Mexico and Guatemala to express our support for your leadership of the Biden administration's diplomatic efforts to address the root causes of irregular migration to the United States. After four years of ineffective policies, we welcome your leadership to implement a comprehensive strategy that mitigates the underlying factors driving migration from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, including alarming levels of violence, low levels of democratic governance, and widespread poverty, as well as the impact of recent natural disasters.

The United States must develop and implement an approach that responds to current humanitarian challenges in Central America and undertakes the long-term work needed to promote greater stability in communities across the region. We lament that the Trump administration's misguided policies and erratic management of foreign assistance impeded U.S. efforts to address the challenges in the region. The setback of the last four years negatively affected Americans, given that the situation in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras directly affects U.S. national interests and our economic security.

As an essential element of the Biden administration's Central America strategy, we encourage you to prioritize initiatives that strengthen democratic governance and combat corruption and human rights violations. For too long, leaders from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras have placed their interests above those of their citizens. In recent months, we have seen them renew efforts to undermine checks and balances on democratic governance and weaken the institutions that ensure government transparency. We appreciate you speaking clearly on these issues and ask that the Biden administration utilize all available U.S. foreign policy tools to ensure that Central American government officials are held accountable for their involvement in criminal activities, human rights abuses, and the undermining of democracy. The Biden administration should also develop robust safeguards on U.S. foreign assistance in order to prevent misuse of our aid.

We encourage you to ensure that U.S. engagement in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras includes support for the most vulnerable populations in the region, including women, children, indigenous populations, and LGBTQ people. We know that you are a stalwart defender of survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence and believe that a robust and coordinated interagency response to gender-based violence in the region is critical. Additionally, it is essential to continue pressing government and civil society leaders in the region to strengthen compliance with labor, humanitarian, and international human rights laws. We also welcome

your progress in securing commitments from the private sector to promote the conditions for inclusive and equitable economic growth, which must be part of any long term solution to the challenges in the in the region.

Finally, in late 2020, Hurricanes Eta and Iota caused extensive damage across much of Central America, displacing hundreds of thousands of people, causing billions of dollars in damages, and increasing the push factors for migration. After hurricane Mitch in 1998, the United States provided over \$1 billion in humanitarian aid to help recovery efforts. While we appreciate your announcement to provide \$310 million in aid to Central America, we encourage the Biden administration to continue deploying humanitarian assistance to communities disproportionately affected by the natural disaster.

Ensuring stability in Central America directly supports the national interests of the United States. As such, we support your efforts to advance a comprehensive strategy to address challenges in the region. Thank you for attention to these issues.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



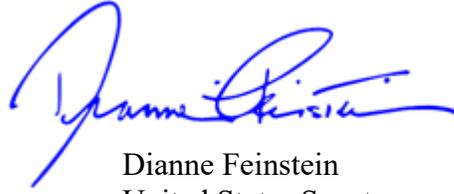
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United States Senator



Michael Bennet
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
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Thomas R. Carper
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Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator