

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

March 18, 2022

Anthony Blinken  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C St. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

In recent years, migration to the United States from Central American countries has increased exponentially. Since 2014, more and more migrants from Central America – most notably from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras – have left their homes and undertaken the dangerous journey north to the United States in hopes of building a better life for themselves and their families.

Along the route through Central America and Mexico, migrants face harsh terrain, threats of violence, harassment from local authorities, and even exploitation by smugglers and cartels as they seek to cross the U.S.-Mexico border. The continued enforcement of Title 42 and reinstatement of the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) has further devastated migrants arriving at our border from Central America. According to the International Organization for Migration, at least [650 people](#) died attempting to cross the U.S.-Mexico border in 2021, the highest number in one year since 2014.

The Biden-Harris administration has prioritized their efforts to help curb migration from the Northern Triangle on addressing the main drivers of migration, or “root causes”, in these three countries. Through the Department of State and agencies like the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Biden-Harris administration has [funded efforts](#) to restore government transparency, reduce corruption, and help create financial stability within the region. However, the administration must also focus resources on establishing legal and safe alternatives for individuals to apply for asylum, such as in-country asylum processing. The United States has in the past established in-country processing programs as a response to large and potentially dangerous surges of migrants from [Cuba, Haiti, Vietnam, and Iraq](#). In 2014, the Obama administration responded to an unprecedented surge of unaccompanied minors from Central American by establishing the [Central American Minors \(CAM\) Refugee/Parole Program](#). This allowed minors from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to apply for humanitarian protections without having to leave their homes.

In-country asylum processing programs can humanely deter irregular migration to the United States that so often puts people at risk of harm or death. That is why we urge the U.S. Department of State to work with leaders at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to establish robust in-country processing

programs across the Northern Triangle. Establishing in-country asylum processing programs, however, does not preclude the urgent need to restore full access to asylum at our southern land borders.

Requiring people, often with limited resources, to abandon their homes and undertake a dangerous journey just for the opportunity to apply for asylum in the United States is senseless and irresponsible. Despite having the tools and resources necessary to set up in-country processing programs in Central America, the U.S. is needlessly endangering people who want a better life for themselves and their families. We cannot wait for the situation in Central America to further deteriorate before seriously considering in-country processing programs. We can and must do better by our southern neighbors.

Sincerely,



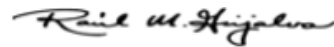
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Teresa Leger Fernández  
Member of Congress



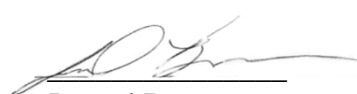
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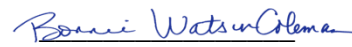
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