

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 8, 2019

Kevin K. McAleenan
Commissioner
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20229

Dear Commissioner McAleenan:

Recently, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) installed barbed wire barriers at land ports of entry in El Paso, Texas. CBP's decision to further harden ports of entry along the southwest border in this way is unacceptable.¹ We urge you to utilize your discretion to remove these barriers immediately.

Unfortunately, this dangerous and unsightly hardening makes our vibrant and safe border look like a war zone. These barriers are blocking lanes meant to facilitate the legal crossing of people and goods. They also pose an unnecessary safety risk to pedestrians crossing on a daily basis, as we witnessed during our recent Congressional delegation tour of the Paso del Norte bridge in downtown El Paso. CBP is literally creating obstacles that harm both the local and national economy and impede lawful crossings.

CBP asserts that barbed wire barriers are necessary because of the increasing numbers of Central American asylum-seekers. Though these families and children represent a humanitarian challenge, there is no national emergency to justify the deployment of these barriers. Moreover, our laws give these families and children the right to apply for asylum.²

We urge you to remove these barbed wire barriers from El Paso ports of entry immediately and prioritize smart border security measures that do not impede trade and travel or pose a safety risk to the public.

Sincerely,



Bennie G. Thompson
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security



Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress

¹ See <https://www.kvia.com/news/el-paso/cbp-installing-barbed-wire-at-el-paso-ports-of-entry-after-juarez-experiences-migrant-influx/1033526848> and <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/spotlights/cbp-works-military-harden-border-security-ahead-caravan-arrival>

² See 8 USC Sec. 1158