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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

June 23, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

I write to request that the United States and Canadian governments immediately grant the community of Point Roberts, Washington an exemption to the current border rules and reopen the Boundary Bay Border Crossing to save this community from what Point Robert's Fire Chief Christopher Carleton has called an impending "humanitarian crisis."

Last week, it was announced that the closure of the U.S.-Canadian border will be extended through July 21. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, these restrictions have been extended by 30-day increments, oftentimes within a few days' notice. This most recent extension will have a devastating impact on the small community of Point Roberts in my district. Point Roberts is an exclave community with no direct land crossing to the mainland United States. Throughout the pandemic, the community has been uniquely cut off and isolated due to the border closure. Point Roberts is a peninsula, but the pandemic has made it an economic island.

Many small businesses in Point Roberts have already had to lay off workers, reduce hours of operations, or shut down entirely. Ali Hayton, the owner of the only grocery store in Point Roberts, announced she could no longer sustain her losses and would be forced to close her doors on July 15 if our countries do not come together to find a workable solution. As the rest of the United States and Canada are beginning to reopen and rebuild from this deadly pandemic, Point Roberts remains completely isolated.

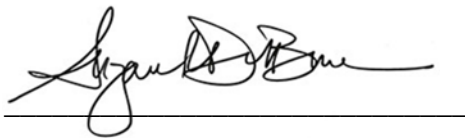
Other exclave communities along the U.S.-Canada border have been granted exemptions to the border restrictions. However, Point Roberts has not been granted such an exemption, in part, because Ali operated her store at a loss of hundreds of thousands of dollars in order to provide her community with food and basic necessities. If Ali's grocery store closes its doors on July 15, there will be no choice but to grant Point Roberts this exemption. Therefore, it is irresponsible and callous to the constituents I represent to force them to wait until their only grocery store shuts down before granting them this common-sense exemption. As Ali told my staff in an email: "If I close, this will force every resident up into Canada to buy food. How is this in any one's best interest?"

In addition, over 85 percent of Point Roberts residents are fully vaccinated—one of the highest vaccination rates in either country. Residents of Point Roberts have repeatedly attempted to draw attention to this situation, and have proposed a series of workable, science-based solutions. These include, as the Point Roberts Chamber of Commerce President Brian Calder has stated: “Letters to politicians on both sides of the border, petitions, offers to pay for rapid testing and vaccinate Canadians, and utilizing Point Roberts as a border reopening pilot project, but to no avail.”

The status quo is simply unacceptable. Leaders ultimately bear responsibility for the hardships faced by members of the Point Roberts community. We must act quickly to reach an adequate and safe solution before it is too late. I respectfully request that the United States and Canadian governments immediately grant the community of Point Roberts an exemption to the current border rules and reopen the Boundary Bay Border Crossing.

I appreciate your consideration of this request. Please let me know how I can be of assistance moving forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Suzan K. DelBene", written over a horizontal line.

Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress

Cc: Julie J. Chung, Acting Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs

Cc: Ambassador Arnold Chacon, Chargé d’Affaires, U.S. Embassy Ottawa