

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

August 09, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W.
Washington DC, 20500

Dear President Biden:

Recently, your administration made the unilateral decision to extend the northern border closure until at least August 21, 2021, despite Canada's intention to loosen travel restrictions for fully vaccinated Americans beginning today, and despite great strides made by both countries to rollout COVID-19 vaccines. While your administration has decided to keep the northern border closed, the southern border continues to see an unabated and unprecedented influx of migrants as a direct result of your administration's policies, many of them from nations with weak or non-existent vaccination efforts. This double standard is a threat to our national and economic security and must end immediately.

On March 21, 2020, the governments of the United States and Canada took the extraordinary step of closing the border between the two nations to "non-essential" travel in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Initially, these restrictions were enacted for a 30 day period. More than 500 days later we find ourselves in the same situation which has caused significant economic harm to communities near the U.S.-Canada border in Montana and across the country. Meanwhile, the southern border remains wide open to a never ending flow of illicit drugs and illegal immigrants. In the month of July alone, U.S. authorities reportedly encountered more than 200,000 migrants attempting to illegally enter the country, the highest number in more than 20 years.

This crisis has led to overcrowded holding facilities that have become virtual breeding grounds for the spread of COVID-19, and media reports indicate that COVID-positive migrants are being released into the interior of our country. Instead of addressing this public health crisis at our southern border, which is a direct threat to the health of Americans and our national security, your administration has decided to focus its attention on issuing new guidelines for vaccinated Americans to wear masks. In order to better understand the Administration's public health priorities and approach to the southern border crisis, I respectfully request answers to the following questions:

1. What protocols, if any, are in place to test migrants for COVID-19 who unlawfully enter the U.S. at the southern border?
2. Since January 2021, how many migrants in total, what percentage of migrants encountered, have been tested for COVID-19 at the southern border?
 - a. If a COVID-19 test result is positive, are migrants required to quarantine prior to their release from border patrol custody?

- b. Are all COVID-19 test results submitted to the CDC?
3. Since January 2021, how many migrants in total, and what percentage of migrants encountered have been admitted into the U.S. without being tested for COVID-19 at the southern border?
4. All air passengers traveling to the U.S. are required to show proof of a negative COVID-19 test or documentation of recovery from the virus before entering the country. Why is there no such requirement for migrants entering the U.S. at the southern border?

The manmade crises on both borders pose real-life consequences to the people of Montana. I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve Daines". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

STEVE DAINES
United States Senator