

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 11, 2014

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary
U. S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Johnson:

As Members of the Miami-Dade Congressional Delegation, we are writing to request your assistance in addressing U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) staffing at Miami International Airport (MIA). We write with a sense of urgency because the facilitation of international passengers and freight at MIA, along with the ability to accommodate growth in passenger traffic and commerce, continues to be severely impacted due to insufficient CBP officer staffing levels. This is adversely impacting economic growth for Miami-Dade County, the State of Florida and destinations throughout the United States.

MIA is the largest international hub in the State of Florida with 69% of all international passenger traffic. It is also the second largest international gateway in the U.S. with 40% of international passenger traffic. Unfortunately, international passenger arrivals at MIA continue to suffer burdensome wait times and daily missed connections. Over the past five years, MIA's international passenger traffic has grown 24.2 % more than any other U.S. international gateway, while overall CBP staffing at MIA has essentially remained flat.

To address the surge of international passenger traffic, Miami-Dade County has invested more than \$180 million toward a new 400,000-square-foot state-of-the-art Federal Inspection Station (FIS) in MIA's North Terminal. The facility opened in July 2012, providing MIA's airline partners with three terminals to accommodate their international passengers and customers. However, MIA has not been able to recognize the efficiencies of its North Terminal investment due to CBP's inability to provide adequate staffing of the new facility, without compromising staffing in the South and Central terminal FIS' and the critical cargo inspection process.

The Miami-Dade Aviation Department (MDAD), with the support of its airline partners, has implemented numerous initiatives to mitigate CBP staffing shortfalls, including: closing the Central Terminal FIS to allow CBP to concentrate its resources to the South and North FIS facilities, increasing MDAD staffing by 18 percent in the FIS' to provide passenger assistance and crowd management; and the installation of 36 Automated Passport Control (APC) self-serve kiosks to increase the productivity of CBP processing.

Most recently, in a creative attempt to mitigate the severe CBP staffing shortages, MDAD participated in the CBP Sec. 560 reimbursable fee agreement pilot program. This program allows MIA to leverage \$6 million to reimburse CBP for overtime costs associated with inspection services above and beyond currently authorized levels.

Despite these efforts, CBP's insufficient staffing levels continue to plague MIA's current operations and are unable to meet the unprecedented growth in our international travel market. Indeed, six new international carriers and one new domestic carrier with service to an international destination joined MIA in 2012 and 2013 and our hub airline AA added 13 new international routes. In 2014, there are six confirmed new international airlines starting service at MIA and there are currently ongoing discussions with eleven airlines for new service to MIA. Additionally, five existing MIA air carriers are planning on expanding service for the 2014 World Cup in Brazil and the Rio de Janeiro Olympics in 2016.

With the expansion and attractiveness of global tourist destinations, larger aircraft and new fuel efficiencies, U.S. airports are in strong competition with other global international airports for trade and tourism. MIA has invested in the necessary infrastructure to accommodate its growth and it would be unconscionable if a key U.S. port of entry cannot capitalize on new markets and additional international air service because of CBP's insufficient staffing levels. Based on MIA's current and projected international passenger arrival levels, CBP staffing at MIA remains inadequate and threatens to undermine bipartisan efforts to significantly increase travel and tourism to the United States. Inaction to address this issue will only serve to threaten the competitiveness and economic growth of Miami-Dade County, the State of Florida and the United States.

In accordance with all applicable rules and regulations, we ask that you address these critical CBP staffing issues at MIA. We thank you for your attention to our concerns, and we look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress



Bill Nelson
United States Senator



Marco Rubio
United States Senator



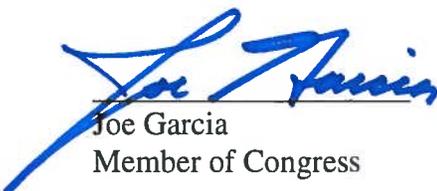
Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



Mario Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress



Frederica Wilson
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Joe Garcia
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