



One Hundred Sixteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
www.foreignaffairs.house.gov

April 22, 2019

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write to express our serious concern over the Administration's recent announcement that it will drastically cut U.S. assistance to the Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. This assistance supports efforts to address the challenging economic and security conditions that help form the root causes of mass child and family migration to the United States. It also enables us to combat transnational gangs, like MS-13, that are a threat to our communities here at home. Assistance under the U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America is having positive results, and while improvements can be made, we believe that cutting assistance would be counterproductive and lead to increased migration flows to the U.S.

We recently traveled to El Salvador and witnessed first-hand how the State Department and USAID are driving at-risk youth away from MS-13 and other criminal gangs by providing them with technical skills and job training. We also observed a State Department-funded project supported by the FBI that is assisting the Salvadoran government's investigations and tracking of MS-13 leaders directing criminal activities in the U.S. and Central America. Since FY 16, these projects have helped contribute to a 52 percent drop in the country's homicide rate and led to the prosecution of multiple MS-13 gang leaders.

As you know, El Salvador will soon have a strong U.S. partner in President-elect Nayib Bukele, who expressed to us his commitment to working with the United States in every way possible, including by supporting pro-market policies necessary to create jobs and attract foreign investment. We understand President-elect Bukele expressed the same sentiments to National Security Advisor John Bolton and other high-level Administration officials during his visit to Washington last month. Eliminating our assistance during this critical transition will raise doubts

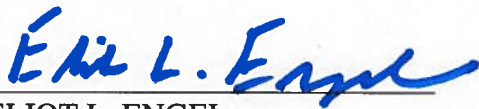
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over the reliability of the U.S. as a consistent partner in the region and create a void that China and other adversaries will look to fill.

We acknowledge that more work is needed to address Central America's challenges. As the leaders of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, we take our oversight responsibilities seriously, and we look forward to working with the State Department and USAID to ensure that these programs are an efficient use of taxpayer dollars. However, ending assistance to Central America outright will not achieve the Trump Administration's stated objective of curbing migration. We believe it will exacerbate the problems facing these countries and hurt the progress made with approximately \$2.1 billion dollars' worth of U.S. assistance since FY 2016.

You recently stated that you would present a set of requirements to each of the three countries laying out the U.S. expectations and that you would consider whether, and how, to restart providing assistance to them. You also recently said that the President is going to use every lawful tool that he has available to stop the challenges of drugs and human trafficking affecting our border. We urge you to work closely with Congress as you make these decisions and request regular updates on the status of the review, including the criteria you are establishing to evaluate this assistance. We are working together on legislation that will strengthen our assistance efforts in Central America and it is essential that we all work together to advance a comprehensive policy that is responsive to the needs of our partners in the region and serves our national security interests.

Sincerely,



ELIOT L. ENGEL
Chairman
House Committee on Foreign Affairs



MICHAEL T. McCAUL
Ranking Member
House Committee on Foreign Affairs

Cc: Ambassador Mark Green, Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development