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**One Hundred Seventeenth Congress**  
**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Foreign Affairs**  
2170 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
[www.foreignaffairs.house.gov](http://www.foreignaffairs.house.gov)

July 12, 2021

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

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We are writing to request that the Department prioritize efforts to reduce processing time for passport applications, an issue of significant concern to Members of Congress and their constituents. As American citizens are beginning to resume international travel for personal and business purposes, they presently must wait up to 18 weeks for routine services or up to 10 weeks for expedited services—waiting periods that go well beyond usual processing times prior to the start of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

We appreciate that COVID-19 has placed tremendous strain on the operations of the Bureau of Consular Affairs, as consular facilities across the globe had to close or limit their operations to help prevent the spread of the virus and keep employees and customers safe. Public health and the safety of the Department's workforce must of course be paramount. As more and more employees are able to safely return to work, and with demand for passports surging, it is critical that the Department use all available tools to reduce extended processing times, including strategies developed to address past passport backlogs. Additionally, we invite the Department to work with Congress on any additional approaches needed to better deliver passport services to the American people and meet the rapidly increased demand.

We therefore request responses to the following questions by July 19, 2021:

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- What is the State Department's strategy to reduce processing times for passport applications and address increases in demand as international travel resumes?
- What percentage of passport processing staff are working in-person in processing facilities as of July 19, 2021? How many passport applications are being processed at these staffing levels on a weekly basis, and how many new applications is the Department receiving each week?
- What is the Department's estimated time frame for reducing passport processing times to pre-pandemic levels?
- How is the Department currently engaging other entities that play a role in processing and delivering passports to the American people, including the U.S. Postal Service?
- What additional resources or authorities from Congress might be useful to your efforts to help overcome these challenges?

Thank you in advance for your attention to this important matter that is essential to helping Americans resume travel and boosting economic recovery from the pandemic. We look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



GREGORY W. MEEKS  
Chair



MICHAEL T. MCCAUL  
Ranking Member