

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 28, 2018

The Honorable Michael Pence
Vice President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Vice President Pence,

As you meet with leaders of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, we encourage you to emphasize the United States' commitment to addressing the root causes of poverty, violence, and instability compelling people to migrate to the United States. We have witnessed a heartbreaking crisis on our Southern border over the past couple of weeks because of devastating conditions in countries in the Northern Triangle.

El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala have homicide rates of 60, 43, and 26 per 100,000 residents, respectively, making the Northern Triangle one of the most dangerous regions in the world. As you know, these countries suffer from weak of rule of law, which contributes to high rates of crime, drug trafficking, poverty, and inequality. These are the factors which compel individuals and families to flee to safety and better opportunities in the United States.

Last June, your participation in the Northern Triangle Conference on Prosperity and Security in Central America, where you professed support for strong partnerships and addressing the root causes of conflict and instability in the region was an important and welcome demonstration of U.S. leadership. Unfortunately, the Administration has not pursued sustained engagement to advance these efforts, and has proposed slashing the budget for these very efforts. The Administration has still not nominated an Ambassador to Honduras.

U.S. engagement with governments, civil society, and security forces in the region has, and can continue to, help promote stability and economic development. As you are aware, U.S. assistance through the U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America builds on the region's own Alliance for Prosperity plan and is critical to strengthening democratic governance in the region. Transnational criminal organizations and gangs flourish when they are able to capitalize on poverty and lack of education and opportunity, particularly for youth. Supporting good governance and responsible economic development are key to promoting long-term stability in each of these countries.

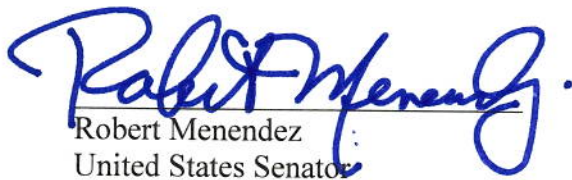
We encourage you to fully implement and fund the U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America, hold the governments of El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala accountable in meeting clear benchmarks to advance the rule of law and promote transparency in their respective countries, pledge full support for the work of the International Commission Against

Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) and the Mission to Support the Fight Against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH).

We ask that you affirmatively commit to U.S. efforts through the State Department, USAID and other civilian agencies that strengthen the rule of law in the Northern Triangle and directly advance U.S. national interests by improving citizen security, combatting drug trafficking, increasing economic prosperity, and addressing migration in the region.

Responsibly addressing the anguishing emergency at our Southern border requires a comprehensive policy that addresses its root causes.

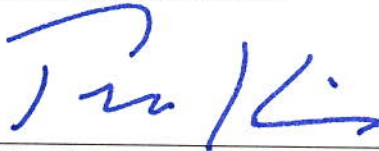
Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator