

March 18, 2019

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

We write to express our urgent concern for numerous Connecticut constituents who have been stranded in countries abroad due to swiftly evolving travel guidance and restrictions in response to the rapid spread of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). This is particularly affecting Americans currently living or traveling in countries that have closed their borders.

We urge you to do everything in your power to ensure that Americans abroad are receiving timely guidance and instructions regarding the risk of COVID19 in their current host countries, as well as information regarding travel restrictions or options for returning to the United States. We understand the State Department has recommended that Americans living or traveling abroad should enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive the latest security updates from the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate, but we have also heard alarming reports that Americans have not received alerts or messages from STEP regarding safety concerns, security updates, or travel advisories.

We are particularly concerned for our Connecticut constituents – including student exchange programs, graduate students, and families traveling with children who have special needs – who are currently stranded in countries that have closed their borders. We have heard from many Connecticut constituents who are stuck in Morocco and Peru, in particular, and have received little to no guidance about next steps for returning to the United States. Some families have reported that the embassies have told them there is “nothing they can do” to assist – even though many other countries are evacuating citizens – or were given inaccurate information about flight cancellations that caused them to miss an opportunity to get home.

Of course we recognize that these are unprecedented circumstances, particularly as each country takes unique steps to protect citizens and restrict travel. However, many other nations have mobilized to bring their citizens home as swiftly as possible, and it appears the United States is lagging behind our allies in terms of providing guidance and assistance. We urge you to exercise decisive leadership to provide immediate support for all Americans abroad to ensure the safety, health, and well-being of U.S. citizens and members of the global community.

Thank you for your urgent attention to this time-sensitive request, and we look forward to working with you to provide any additional authorities or funding that you may require in order to ensure the timely and safe repatriation of our constituents and all Americans globally.

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
United States Senate



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate