

**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 19, 2024

Mr. Tom Perez  
Director  
Office of Intergovernmental Affairs  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Perez:

The House Committee on Natural Resources (Committee) is conducting ongoing oversight<sup>1</sup> on the decision to house migrants at Floyd Bennett Field, a portion of Gateway National Recreation Area, on National Park Service (NPS) land.<sup>2</sup> Widespread media reports and statements from city and state officials indicate that you, in your role as Director of the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs and Senior Advisor and Assistant to President Joe Biden,<sup>3</sup> played an integral role in coordinating the Federal response to the migrant crisis in New York City, including the establishment of a migrant encampment at Floyd Bennett Field.<sup>4</sup> As a result, and to ensure the effective management of America's public lands, the Committee seeks more information to better understand your role in the Biden administration's unprecedented decision to establish a migrant encampment on National Park Service land.

In May 2023, Governor Hochul sent President Biden a letter requesting that the Federal government "provide New York State assistance through the immediate construction and operation of temporary shelters on Federal lands and property" to help alleviate the migrant crisis in New

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<sup>1</sup> See Letter from Rep. Bruce Westerman, Chairman, H. Comm. on Natural Resources, et al., to The Honorable Deb Haaland, Secretary, Dep't of the Interior, and Charles F. Samms III, Director, National Park Service (Sep. 15, 2023), [https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hnr\\_letter\\_to\\_doi\\_nps\\_on\\_migrant\\_shelters.pdf](https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hnr_letter_to_doi_nps_on_migrant_shelters.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> National Park Service, *Lease Between U.S. Dep't of the Interior, National Park Service and the City of New York for the Premises known as Portions of Floyd Bennett Field, in the Jamaica Bay Unit of Gateway National Recreation Area*, DEP'T OF THE INTERIOR (Sep. 15, 2023), <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/foia/upload/FINAL-Lease-Floyd-Bennet-Field-09-15-2023-2.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> *Statement from President Joe Biden on Tom Perez*, THE WHITE HOUSE (June 12, 2023), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/06/12/statement-from-president-joe-biden-on-tom-perez/>.

<sup>4</sup> *Statement From Governor Hochul on Meeting With Tom Perez, Senior Advisor and Assistant to President Biden*, NEW YORK STATE (Aug. 10, 2023), <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/statement-governor-hochul-meeting-tom-perez-senior-advisor-and-assistant-president-biden>; Dan Rivoli, *Biden advisor meets with mayor about help with migrants in New York*, SPECTRUM NEWS NY1 (Aug. 10, 2023), <https://ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/politics/2023/08/10/biden-advisor-meets-with-mayor-about-help-with-migrants-in-new-york>.

York.<sup>5</sup> Then, in July 2023, you participated in a meeting to discuss the migrant crisis with New York City Mayor Eric Adams, the New York Democratic Congressional Delegation, and Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas.<sup>6</sup> The meeting occurred in Washington, D.C., where New York City officials had traveled to plead to the Biden administration for help.<sup>7</sup> Shortly thereafter, on August 1, 2023, you participated in a call with Governor Hochul.<sup>8</sup>

On August 10, 2023, publicly available records indicated you travelled to New York to work with officials from New York City and New York State for the purpose of addressing the migrant crisis.<sup>9</sup> While there, you met with the Governor of New York, Kathy Hochul, and her staff to discuss the potential assistance that the White House and Biden administration could provide to New York, including the use of Floyd Bennett Field for a migrant encampment.<sup>10</sup> Governor Hochul stated the August 10<sup>th</sup> meeting followed “months” of communications between her office and the White House regarding the migrant crisis in New York.<sup>11</sup> The Governor’s office later stated they coordinated Federal visits to Floyd Bennett Field to assess its suitability for housing migrants.<sup>12</sup> On August 10, 2023, you also met with New York City Mayor Eric Adams to discuss site locations for a migrant encampment on Federal land and various legal strategies to obtain Federal support to help manage the migrant crisis.<sup>13</sup>

On August 21, 2023, the Department of the Interior (DOI) and NPS agreed to lease Floyd Bennett Field to the City of New York for a migrant encampment.<sup>14</sup> In response, Governor Hochul described it as a “significant development,” as she had been working with the Biden administration for “many many many months” to house migrants at Floyd Bennett Field despite the fact that DOI and NPS said they “do not allow” the use of national park land for migrant housing.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Governor Kathy Hochul, *Governor Hochul Urges President Biden to Mobilize Federal Government to Provide Shelter for Asylum Seekers Arriving in New York City*, NEW YORK STATE (May 12, 2023), <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-urges-president-biden-mobilize-federal-government-provide-shelter-asylum>.

<sup>6</sup> Jeffery C. Mays, *Mayor Adams Says Migrant Influx Will Cost New York City \$12 Billion*, N.Y. TIMES (Aug. 9, 2023), <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/09/nyregion/adams-nyc-migrants-cost.html>.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> Governor Hochul’s Past Schedules—August 2023, NEW YORK STATE (Aug. 2023), <https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2023-12/August2023.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> See Chris Smith, *The Political Wrangling Behind the Tragic Images of Migrants Stranded in Manhattan*, VANITY FAIR (Aug. 10, 2023), <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2023/08/political-wrangling-tragic-images-of-migrants-stranded-in-manhattan-eric-adams-biden>.

<sup>10</sup> Statement From Governor Hochul, *supra* note 4.

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> Governor Hochul Updates New Yorkers on State’s Ongoing Efforts to Shelter and Support Asylum Seekers, NEW YORK STATE (Aug. 12, 2023), <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-updates-new-yorkers-states-ongoing-efforts-shelter-and-support-asylum-seekers#:~:text=Governor%20Hochul%20also%20announced%20the%20shelters%20in%20New%20York%20City>.

<sup>13</sup> Rivoli, *supra* note 4.

<sup>14</sup> Eyewitness News, *Floyd Bennett Field to be used to house asylum seekers in Brooklyn, Hochul announces*, ABC NEWS (Aug. 21, 2023), <https://abc7ny.com/nyc-migrants-asylum-seekers-floyd-bennett-field/13680120/>; Jon Campbell, *White House approves migrant shelter at Brooklyn’s Floyd Bennett Field, Gov. Hochul says*, GOTHAMIST (Aug. 21, 2023), <https://gothamist.com/news/white-house-approves-migrant-shelter-at-brooklyns-floyd-bennett-field-gov-hochul-says>.

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*



On September 14, 2023, you visited New York City as the Biden administration was “trying hard... to project the message that they are delivering much needed help” to address the migrant crisis in New York.<sup>16</sup> During the trip, reports indicate that you met with business leaders and Democratic donors concerned with the Federal government’s lackluster response to the migrant crisis.<sup>17</sup> The next day, on September 15, 2023, the Biden administration executed the lease to establish a migrant encampment at Floyd Bennett Field (FBF Lease).<sup>18</sup>

On September 18, 2023, Committee Chairman Bruce Westerman, along with Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee Chairman Paul Gosar and Rep. Nicole Malliotakis, executed a site visit to Floyd Bennett Field.<sup>19</sup> The members and Republican staff were joined by local elected officials and staff representing both NPS and New York City. While there, NPS staff acknowledged previous site visits by high-level Biden administration officials to assess its suitability for establishing a migrant encampment.

On September 22, 2023, you traveled to Albany, New York, for a 9:00 a.m. meeting with Governor Hochul and her staff to discuss Federal assistance for the migrant crisis in New York.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the Biden administration taking the extraordinary step of establishing a migrant encampment at the National Park Service’s Floyd Bennett Field site, the migrant crisis in New York City has continued unabated. The ongoing crisis led Mayor Adams to state that “we cannot continue to do the Federal government’s job” as New York City buckles under President Biden’s failed immigration policies.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, to help New York City stay afloat, Mayor Adams issued an executive order requiring bus companies to provide advance notice of migrant arrivals.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, earlier this year, a surging “migrant crime wave” led Mayor Eric Adams to call for increased law enforcement help from Federal authorities.<sup>23</sup>

Through all of this, you have remained in “regular contact” with local officials, serving as the intermediary between the White House and officials from New York City and New York State to develop policy responses to the migrant crisis in New York.<sup>24</sup> Your “regular contact” with local officials includes frequent conversations with Camille Joseph Varlack, Chief of Staff to Mayor

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<sup>16</sup> Melissa Russo, *Biden team denies New York's right-to-shelter policy hurt city's case for aid*, NBC NEW YORK (Sep. 14, 2023), <https://www.nbcnewyork.com/investigations/migrant-crisis/biden-team-denies-new-yorks-right-to-shelter-hurt-its-case-for-aid/4680713/>.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> FBF Lease, *supra* note 2.

<sup>19</sup> Press release, *Westerman Visits NYC Migrant Processing Center, Condemns National Park Land*, H. COMM. ON NATURAL RESOURCES (Sep. 18, 2023), <https://naturalresources.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=414852>.

<sup>20</sup> *Governor Hochul's Past Schedules—September 2023*, NEW YORK STATE (Sep. 2023), <https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2023-12/September2023.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> Jeffery C. Mays and Dana Rubinstein, *As Migrant Arrivals Surge, Adams Sets Controls on Bus Arrivals*, N.Y. TIMES (Dec. 27, 2023), <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/27/nyregion/mayor-adams-migrants-bus.html>.

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> David Propper, *Eric Adams proposes U-turn on NYC's controversial sanctuary city status after migrant crime wave grips Big Apple*, NEW YORK POST (Feb. 27, 2024), <https://nypost.com/2024/02/27/us-news/adams-calls-nyc-to-cooperate-with-ice-over-migrants-accused-of-serious-crimes/>.

<sup>24</sup> *Mayor Adams Holds In-Person Media Availability*, CITY OF NEW YORK (Nov. 14, 2023), <https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/867-23/transcript-mayor-adams-holds-in-person-media-availability>.

Eric Adams (Camille Joseph Varlack), regarding “all the issues that are facing New York City” stemming from the migrant crisis.<sup>25</sup> Your work on the migrant crisis—and the close relationship you established with New York officials from work on the migrant crisis—resulted in you joining a member of Governor Hochul’s staff and Democratic donors in a VIP suite for an NFL playoff game in Buffalo on January 21, 2024.<sup>26</sup>

The Committee is deeply concerned with the Biden administration’s management of America’s public lands and the unprecedented decision to use national park land for a migrant encampment. To assist the Committee with ensuring effective management of America’s public lands, and better understand your role in establishing a migrant encampment at Floyd Bennett Field, please provide the following documents and information—from May 12, 2023, to the present—by May 3, 2024:

1. All documents and communications regarding the selection of Floyd Bennett Field as the site of a migrant encampment on Federal land.
2. All documents, communications, and travel logs regarding visits you made to New York regarding site locations for housing migrants on Federal land.
3. All documents and communications regarding the legality of housing migrants on Federal land.
4. All documents, communications, and travel logs regarding site visits you made to Floyd Bennett Field.
5. All calendar entries for meetings that involved the use of Floyd Bennett Field for a migrant encampment.
6. All documents and communications you sent Camille Joseph Varlack regarding Floyd Bennett Field.
7. All documents and communications you received from Camille Joseph Varlack regarding Floyd Bennett Field.
8. All documents and communications you sent regarding the Floyd Bennett Field Lease.
9. All documents and communications you received regarding the Floyd Bennett Field Lease.

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<sup>25</sup> *Id.*

<sup>26</sup> Empire State Development, *I LOVE NY Hospitality Suite – 2023-24 Season Report*, NEW YORK STATE (2023-2024), <https://esd.ny.gov/sites/default/files/media/document/2023-24-I-Love-New-York-Hospitality-Suite-Report.pdf>; see also Carl Campanile & Vaughn Golden, *Biden aide Tom Perez, tasked with helping NY through migrant crisis, lands VIP suite at Buffalo Bills stadium as border outrage grows*, NY POST (Mar. 4, 2024), <https://nypost.com/2024/03/04/us-news/biden-aide-tom-perez-lands-in-vip-suite-at-buffalo-bills-stadium-amid-border-crisis/>.

An attachment to this letter provides additional instructions for responding to the requests from the Committee on Natural Resources. Please contact the Majority staff for the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee at (202) 225-2761 or [HNRR.Oversight@mail.house.gov](mailto:HNRR.Oversight@mail.house.gov) with any questions. Under House Rule X, the Committee on Natural Resources has “general oversight” of any matter relating to its jurisdiction, including the management of national parks and Federal lands. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Bruce Westerman  
Chairman  
Committee on Natural Resources



Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations



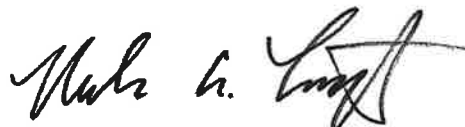
Anthony D'Esposito  
Member of Congress



Andrew Garbarino  
Member of Congress



Nick LaLota  
Member of Congress



Nick Langworthy  
Member of Congress



Nicole Malliotakis  
Member of Congress



Elise Stefanik  
Member of Congress



Claudia Tenney  
Member of Congress

Enclosure