

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 17, 2022

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2210 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We write to express concern regarding recent changes to the Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM), 3 FAM 2370, Domestic Employees Teleworking Overseas (DETO) program policy guidance, dated August 11, 2021.

Our understanding is that these recent changes to the policy guidance have had a negative impact on federally employed spouses who are accompanying their spouse on government assignment or military orders overseas. Specifically, we are aware of federal civilian spouses who are working under approved DETO agreements but have been told their agreement is at risk of being revoked. On the other hand, there are trailing spouses seeking DETO approval by the regional Department of State Chief of Mission (COM) authority who are on extended Leave Without Pay pending review of their application and/or have been denied approval entirely despite having an approved telework agreement with an employing federal department/agency. Specifically, we are concerned that this policy denies all telework requests for federal employees assigned to or near military installations. We certainly understand that DETO Agreements are rare in the Federal Government due to increased security concerns and costs to employing agencies. To that end, we request your immediate response to the following questions:

- (1) What specific data or reporting prompted the memorandum limiting the issuance of DETOs?
- (2) What data points would the State Department require to initiate a reassessment of these limitations?
- (3) Historically, the host department/agency bears the cost of responsibility to keep the federal or spouse employee under a DETO Agreement. What is the administrative cost for the State Department to meet its own requirements?
- (4) As continued affects from COVID-19 remain ongoing, has the Department of State looked into potentially raising any numerical caps to allow federally employed

- trailing spouses, including military spouses, to continue to use, and expand the use, of DETO agreements?
- (5) What considerations have been taken regarding the impact of the memorandum on military spouses and trailing spouses deployed overseas?
 - (6) How many DETO agreements are currently active?
 - (7) How many DETO agreements are pending review by the regional Department of State Chief of Mission (COM) authority?
 - (8) How many federal employees are currently on Leave Without Pay pending the review of a DETO agreement?
 - (9) How many DETO agreement applications have been denied due to lack of resources and/or staff necessary to process applications?

We welcome an open dialogue on these matters and understand the Department of State is in communication with the Department of Defense regarding this matter. In the near-term, we look forward to a detailed response that offers an estimated timeline for resolution and addresses each of the above questions.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,



Marsha Blackburn
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator