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September 21, 2021

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

I write to express my extreme concern about the treatment of Haitian refugees attempting to seek safety in our country. As a State Senator who represents one of the largest Haitian-American communities in the nation, this matter is of the utmost concern to me, and to thousands of my constituents.

As you are aware, Haiti has been dealt repeated blows in recent years. Even while the country was still recovering from the catastrophic earthquake that struck in 2010, it faced new devastation from Hurricane Matthew in 2016. This year, the assassination of President Jovenel Moise on July 7 threw Haiti's government into turmoil, and large sections of the country are now under the control of gangs and criminal enterprises. The earthquake that struck on August 14 was the final straw. The situation in Haiti is dire.

Against this background, the Biden Administration's decision to begin mass expulsion of Haitian refugees is irresponsible, immoral and cruel. Many of the people being sent back to Haiti have not lived or worked there for years, and are returning to a devastated and impoverished nation without hope of finding work or even feeding their families. The cities and towns they are being sent to are not equipped to provide support or help them. Rather than contributing further to the suffering of these individuals and the people of Haiti, the Department should do everything possible to adjudicate asylum claims in a timely and fair manner.

Making matters worse, images of Border Patrol agents attacking refugees from horseback with whips and sticks have now been circulated around the world, graphically showing the cruelty

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that the Administration's current policies have contributed to. I urge you to fully investigate this appalling incident and ensure that all agents involved are removed from their posts and face appropriate discipline for their behavior.

American voters elected Joe Biden President in large part because he pledged to reverse the draconian and inhumane immigration policies of the Trump Administration. The Administration's actions with respect to Haitian refugees simply do not live up to that pledge. I urge you to change course immediately.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Elijah Reichlin-Melnick". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "E".

Elijah Reichlin-Melnick
New York State Senator, 38th District