June 21, 2023

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
245 Murray Lane, SW  
Washington D.C. 20528

Dear Secretaries Blinken and Mayorkas:

We write to express our support for efforts to include Israel in the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) and to encourage both the Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security to prioritize finalizing Israel’s accession this year.

Approximately 450,000 Israelis travel annually to the U.S., and that number has been increasing each year. With 93 weekly direct flights from Israel to U.S. airports, there is already significant demand for travel. As such, Israel’s participation in VWP would significantly increase the potential for both tourism and business travel.

In pursuit of these benefits for both countries, the Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security – particularly Ambassador Nides and the entire staff at the U.S. Embassy in Israel – and the Government of Israel have all worked diligently to enable Israel’s eligibility for VWP. In January, Israel’s non-immigrant visa refusal rate fell below 3%, satisfying one key requirement of eligibility for the program, and since that time the Government of Israel has been working to implement the necessary technical requirements for inclusion. Finally, Israel’s parliament has passed all of the legislation to facilitate requisite data sharing, which underscores Israel’s commitment to meeting the necessary benchmarks and gaining admission into VWP.

We recognize that there are still outstanding issues that must be addressed before Israel’s participation in the program can be finalized, and we urge both sides to continue working toward addressing these issues – including the reciprocal treatment of U.S. citizens - to ensure Israel’s compliance with all program requirements before the deadline of September 30, 2023.
We hope that the Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security will continue efforts to ensure that the momentum that has yielded the aforementioned progress is not lost, and that Israel’s accession to VWP is finalized this year.

Sincerely,

Rick Scott
United States Senator

Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

John Thune
United States Senator

Patty Murray
United States Senator

James E. Risch
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Roger F. Wicker
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator

Maggie Hassan
United States Senator
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United States Senator

Bill Hagerty
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Pete Ricketts
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Mike Lee
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United States Senator

Angus S. King, Jr.
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Raphael G. Warnock
United States Senator

Tim Scott
United States Senator

Cindy Hyde-Smith
United States Senator

James Lankford
United States Senator