

July 6, 2023

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
Washington, DC 20520

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

Dear Secretaries Blinken and Mayorkas:

On behalf of the American Zionist Movement, the convening body of 43 national Jewish Zionist organizations from across the broad ideological, political and religious spectrum of our community, we write in strong support of your efforts to include Israel in the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) and urge the Departments of State and Homeland Security to continue working toward allowing Israel to join the program this fiscal year.

The addition of Israel to the VWP, joining 40 other enrolled countries, would serve the citizens and economies of both the US and Israel. Israelis are eager to travel to the United States and entry into the VWP would likely lead to a surge in visits. It is estimated that nearly 500,000 Israelis visit the US annually, a number that, according to a US Travel Association report, would increase by a third if Israel is allowed into the VWP. That same report estimates that these additional visitors would generate \$3.6 billion more in economic output and support 6,000 new jobs annually in the US.

Collaborative work in high tech, research and development, education and investment would be enhanced by easing travel to the United States. Hundreds of US companies, including some of the top names in the high-tech and cyber industries, maintain headquarters in Israel, while numerous Israeli start-ups have established US branches and identify the United States as their primary market. The regular travel of employees of these companies between the two countries would be facilitated by Israel's inclusion in the VWP.

Jewish-Americans, including a growing community of Israeli-Americans, are deeply connected to the State of Israel, not only through family and personal ties, but also through numerous exchange and immersive educational programs each year that bring hundreds of thousands of Americans and Israelis together in ways that strengthen people-to-people, economic, athletic and cultural ties between our countries. These relationships would be enhanced by inclusion of Israel in the VWP, which will also greatly benefit the communal and personal ties of other ethnic and religious groups, including Muslim and Christian communities in both countries.

We understand that there is still work to be done before Israel meets the final requirements of the VWP and we commend both governments for their efforts. We are confident these efforts will result in a positive outcome and urge you to continue to work together with the Israeli government officials to build upon the work already accomplished to enable Israel to join the Visa Waiver Program this year.

Sincerely,



Deborah Isaac
President



Michael Laufer
Board Chair



Herbert Block
Executive Director