One Hundred Sixteenth Congress
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

January 29, 2019

The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Nielsen:

Your decision to refuse my invitation to testify before the Committee on Homeland Security regarding our Nation's border security on February 6, 2019, is unreasonable and unacceptable. I strongly urge you to reconsider.

Your attempt to use the President's recent shutdown as an excuse not to testify before Congress prior to the impending shutdown is outrageous. As Secretary of Homeland Security, you should be prepared to testify on border security, the very issue that caused the recent shutdown, at any time and certainly prior to the potential February 15 lapse in appropriations.

During the shutdown, you made numerous public appearances and comments regarding border security. You should be well prepared to inform the public about the Department of Homeland Security's border security needs as well as provide Congress with accurate information that can inform any pending border security legislation.

The recent Federal government shutdown jeopardized homeland security, cost our economy $11 billion, and caused incalculable harm to the country. The Nation is just days away from President Trump again shutting down the government. Your failure to engage Congress only makes averting another shutdown more difficult.

The men and women of the Department of Homeland Security continue to carry out their duties admirably despite difficult and uncertain circumstances. I am hopeful you will follow their lead and agree to testify before the Committee on Homeland Security on February 6. In your public comments on border security, you maintained that Congress should "get [its] job done." Please know that as Chairman, I intend to ensure the Committee fulfills its oversight responsibilities on this important matter.

Sincerely,

BENNIE G. THOMPSON
Chairman