



Written Testimony

of

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Chairman Grassley, Ranking Member Durbin, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was established in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks— one of the darkest days in our nation’s history, that resulted in the death of nearly 3,000 Americans. Its mission then is just as critical as its mission now: protect the American people, prevent acts of terrorism, and secure our homeland.

Every action DHS takes is guided by that mission and responsibility. Thanks to President Trump’s leadership and the hard work of the men and women of DHS, our department has delivered historic results and made our communities safer.

Since the start of President Trump’s second term, daily encounters along the southwest border have declined by 96 percent compared to the Biden administration’s daily average, reaching the lowest levels ever recorded in U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) history.

In President Trump’s first year, total Border Patrol apprehensions along the southwest border were less than an average single month under the Biden administration. Border apprehensions are at the lowest level since data tracking began in 1992.

Currently, the Border Patrol’s daily average encounters at the southwest border are just over 200, compared to over 5,000 per day under the Biden administration.

For ten straight months, Border Patrol has released zero illegal aliens into the interior of the United States. Tens of millions of illegal aliens were released into American communities by the Biden administration.

Put simply, the Trump Administration has ended the open border invasion that allowed millions of violent criminals to roam freely into the interior of our country and put millions of Americans at risk. President Trump has kept his promise to secure our borders and enforce the rule of law. These results reflect our department’s commitment to public safety and the enforcement of the laws that Congress enacted.

The Trump administration has reestablished clear consequences for unlawful entry, strengthened enforcement posture, and eliminated incentives that previously encouraged large-scale illegal migration. This administration has also significantly strengthened interior enforcement to make our American communities safer. In President Trump’s historic first year back in office, nearly 3 million illegal aliens left the United States as a result of this administration’s enforcement efforts — including an estimated 2.2 million self-deportations and more than 675,000 removals. A majority of aliens arrested by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) have a criminal record and have been charged with or convicted of secondary crimes in addition to their initial crime of being in the United States illegally.

During this period, ICE has arrested over 1,500 Known or Suspected Terrorists (KST’s), more than 7,700 gang members, many of whom were allowed into the country under the Biden Administration. These actions reflect a focused effort to prioritize illegal aliens who present the greatest threat to public safety and national security.

In late December, ICE concluded Operation Angel's Honor — a 14-day targeted enforcement operation — resulting in more than 830 criminal illegal alien arrests under the authority of the Laken Riley Act, which mandates detention of illegal aliens accused of certain criminal offenses. These enforcement actions send a clear message: if you violate our laws and endanger American communities, there will be consequences.

At the same time, DHS has taken unprecedented steps to protect some of the most vulnerable victims of the Biden administration's border crisis – unaccompanied children. Under President Biden, more than 450,000 unaccompanied alien children were lost because of his dangerous open-border policies. Tens of thousands of children the previous administration failed to track, protect, or account for were left vulnerable to sex trafficking, abuse, and exploitation by violent cartels, gangs, and smugglers.

Under President Trump, the DHS and the Department of Health and Human Services have already located over 145,000 of these children — and we will not stop until every last one is found. Protecting children and our communities is not political, it's a moral responsibility that our officers at DHS are committed to fulfilling.

Beyond immigration enforcement, DHS has delivered measurable results in disrupting narcotics trafficking and transnational crime. Fentanyl trafficking at the southern border has been cut by more than half compared to the same period in 2024. The Coast Guard seized enough cocaine this past year to prevent quantities capable of killing more than 193 million Americans from reaching our streets.

DHS has also reinforced the border through physical and technological investments. Nearly \$14 billion has already been obligated for border wall construction from the \$46.5 billion appropriated, and we are on track to finish the border wall by 2028.

We have also reviewed internal spending decisions to ensure taxpayer resources align with mission requirements, saving more than \$13.2 billion through the cancellation or redirection of projects that did not directly advance homeland security priorities. Those funds have been redirected toward frontline enforcement, readiness, and operational capacity.

I want to address the dangerous environment in which our officers are operating today. ICE officers are facing a serious and escalating threat environment, the result of deliberate mischaracterizations of their heroic work via rhetoric that demonizes law enforcement. DHS has documented an 8,000 percent increase in death threats against ICE officers and their families, as well as a more than 1,300 percent increase in assaults while carrying out lawful enforcement operations. These threats are not abstract — they include direct threats against spouses and families, doxxing, and harassment intended to intimidate law enforcement personnel and dissuade them from deporting illegal aliens. Our officers are fathers and mothers, sons and daughters. They put their lives on the line every day to uphold the law, and their families should never face threats over policy disagreements.

Our federal agents and officers operate in increasingly high-risk environments, routinely facing violent resistance while fulfilling their sworn duty to protect the American people and uphold the rule of law. There is a direct correlation between operational safety and local cooperation. In

jurisdictions that reject sanctuary policies and work in lockstep with federal partners, operations proceed safely, utilizing proven de-escalation protocols that result in stronger, more secure outcomes. On the other hand, jurisdictions that openly defy and obstruct law enforcement create lawless environments that endanger their own citizens.

Inaccurate and/or intentionally deceptive narratives that vilify federal agents and officers do not advance justice. Rather, they endanger law enforcement personnel, erode public trust, and fuel unnecessary conflict. Our officers and agents do not write immigration statutes; they carry them out, often in dangerous conditions, confronting cartel violence, human traffickers, and transnational criminal organizations. To counter this and increase transparency, consistent with best practices, we are expanding our existing training on de-escalation and standard operating procedures.

Building on the success of our current programs, where many of our personnel are already trained and operating with advanced equipment, we are increasing the use of body-worn cameras. The Department of Homeland Security has accelerated deployment of these cameras for federal agents and officers in Minneapolis to increase accountability and ensure clearer documentation of enforcement encounters.

I recognize that Members of this Committee hold differing views about immigration policy. But it is important to distinguish between disagreements over policy and the Department's operational responsibility to enforce existing law passed by Congress and the duty our department has to protect our homeland.

Going forward, DHS remains focused on sustaining the most secure border in our nation's history; maintaining historic lows in unlawful entry; increasing removals of illegal aliens; dismantling transnational criminal organizations; strengthening cybersecurity and infrastructure resilience; and ensuring the immigration system functions in a lawful, orderly, and consistent way.

The latest Democrat-led shutdown of DHS is reckless, unnecessary and directly undermines America's national security and harms the men and women of DHS and their families. Despite the House passing a bipartisan, bicameral full-year DHS funding bill, Senate Democrats chose to block funding and hold the department hostage.

As a result, critical national security missions — including border security, immigration enforcement, aviation security, disaster response, cybersecurity, and protection of critical infrastructure — are being strained. Our ability to plan for a safe and successful World Cup is being hindered. More than one hundred thousand dedicated DHS employees are once again being asked to work without pay for the third time in five months.

The impact on the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is particularly concerning. While lifesaving response operations may continue in the short term, a shutdown delays reimbursements to states, disrupts recovery efforts, furloughs personnel who coordinate with local partners, and halts critical preparedness activities — including first responder training and hurricane season planning. If a catastrophic disaster were to strike during a funding lapse, available resources would be strained and recovery timelines extended. I would hope we can all

agree that FEMA should not be defunded and the men and women protecting our country deserve to be paid.

Beyond FEMA, the shutdown is also degrading the capabilities of other frontline DHS components that the American people depend on every day. At the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), two thirds of our workforce have been furloughed. The members of CISA tasked with fighting threats and who are furloughed cannot do their job to protect us against nefarious actors. While CISA can continue to respond to imminent threats and maintain its 24/7 operations center, proactive work that keeps our adversaries at bay — developing new cyber defenses, issuing timely directives to federal agencies, advancing implementation of critical incident reporting requirements, and delivering assessments, training, and exercises to state, local, tribal, territorial, and private-sector partners — is delayed or halted. In the cyber domain, standing still is falling behind, and a shutdown hands an unnecessary advantage to hostile nation-states and criminal organizations that are probing our critical infrastructure every hour of every day.

The shutdown also places tremendous strain on the men and women of TSA, the Secret Service, and the Coast Guard. At the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), roughly 95 percent of the workforce is designated mission-essential; they will continue screening millions of passengers and billions of bags, including during record travel volumes and in the run-up to the 2026 World Cup, but many will do so without pay. That financial hardship drives higher absenteeism, longer checkpoint wait times, and poses a real risk to our ability to sustain the level of aviation and surface transportation security that Americans expect and deserve. In the Secret Service, approximately 94 percent of personnel are mission-critical and will continue to carry out a mission that requires zero errors to protect the President, Vice President, other senior leaders, and major events such as the State of the Union, the G20, and the World Cup. However, the shutdown stalls the very reforms Congress has demanded in areas like airspace security, training, hiring, and technology, and constrains the Secret Service's ability to plan and resource future National Special Security Events and provide critical training to state and local partners. For the Coast Guard, a funding lapse means crews will continue to stand the watch in dangerous environments—interdicting drugs, conducting search and rescue, and defending our maritime approaches—while key training is curtailed and maintenance and contracted work are deferred. Over time, that combination erodes readiness, harms recruitment and retention, and undermines the Coast Guard's ability to safeguard the maritime economy.

At a time when we have produced the most secure border in history and removed nearly 3 million illegal aliens from our country, disrupting the Department responsible for those gains is indefensible. Undermining the work of our agency --- especially in ways that also weaken disaster preparedness and responses nationwide – puts our communities at risk. The Department must be reopened and fully funded to ensure our homeland is prepared to respond to possible threats or retaliatory measures. I want to thank the men and women of DHS for their professionalism, dedication, and commitment to keeping America safe and patience during this time. Our success is only possible because of their service and sacrifices.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to your questions.