

Chairman Peters Opening Statement As Prepared for Delivery
Full Committee Hearing: Securing and Ensuring Order on the Southwest Border
Homeland
May 5, 2022

I'd like to thank each of our witnesses for joining us today, for your dedicated service to the American people, and for your work to address humanitarian and security challenges at our Southern Border over the past two years.

Over the next few months, we know that these challenges will persist, especially as the Administration moves forward with its plans to end Title 42.

While ongoing litigation and shifting COVID-19 circumstances may impact the exact timing of when the public health order is lifted, the Administration must have a detailed, well-thought-out, and well-resourced plan to secure our borders and address expected changes in migration once this policy change goes into effect.

Yesterday, this Committee had an opportunity to hear directly from Secretary Mayorkas on this, and other critical issues. Today, we will have another opportunity to hear from senior Administration officials and go into further detail about how the federal government will secure our borders and manage the proposed termination of this policy.

Title 42 is a temporary public health order, and it is not a long term solution to our border security needs.

Today's hearing is an important opportunity for the Administration to detail both their short-term plans for addressing this expected policy change, as well as the long term solutions that Congress and the Administration must work on together to ensure our borders are secure.

In fact, since Title 42 was initiated to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in March 2020, it has severely restricted the use of proven enforcement mechanisms that prevent illegal border crossings, and in turn has contributed to an increase in repeat illegal crossings.

Soon after this policy was implemented, the number of single adults trying to illegally cross the Southern Border doubled. And now, repeated attempts by individuals to unlawfully enter the United States has reached a nearly fifteen-year high. That is unsustainable and places significant burdens on our border security professionals.

I look forward to discussing the Administration's plans to reinstate proven border security enforcement methods, such as escalating consequences for repeat offenders, that have been shown to significantly reduce illegal crossings between ports of entry, and ensure Border Patrol agents can stay focused on their border security mission.

Reinstating these kinds of consequences will hold individuals who break the law accountable, while ensuring that children, families, and other migrants fleeing persecution are able to present themselves at ports of entry for a timely review of their asylum claims.

In addition to addressing the humanitarian situation at the Southern Border, the Administration must ensure they have the personnel and resources needed to ensure the safe, secure, and efficient facilitation of lawful trade and travel at our ports of entry, and combat the flow of deadly illicit drugs like fentanyl that continue to wreak havoc on communities in Michigan and across the nation.

I have long pressed for robust resources to ensure we have enough personnel, as well as technology like non-intrusive screening equipment, that improves Customs and Border Protection Officers ability to examine vehicles and large amounts of cargo efficiently, and stop illegal drugs from being smuggled across our borders. I look forward to discussing what more the Administration needs to ensure that we can prevent fentanyl and other illegal substances from harming our communities.

Finally, this hearing is also an opportunity to discuss the policies that Congress and the Administration must work together on to address the long-term challenges at our borders, and especially the Southern Border.

Over the past decade, we have seen a surge in the number of migrants arriving at the Southern Border nearly every year, and under both Republican and Democratic administrations. It's clear that without bipartisan action to pass comprehensive immigration reform and reforms to our asylum system, these same challenges will persist for years and decades to come.

I look forward to hearing from today's panel about what long-term solutions the Administration is proposing to address the root causes of migration, increase regional cooperation with our partners in South and Central America, and ensure migrants receive humane treatment while streamlining the asylum process.

Challenges at our Southern Border are not new, but they are significant. Today's discussion will provide this Committee with the opportunity to ensure our nation has sufficient tools, resources, and personnel to take these issues head-on.