

HSGAC Government Operations and Border Management Subcommittee
Hearing:
“Improving Security, Trade, and Travel at Land Ports of Entry at the
Southwest Border”

Wednesday, June 16, 2021

Senator Sinema’s Opening Statement

I welcome Ranking Member Lankford, members of the Subcommittee, and our witnesses to today’s discussion focused on Southwest Border land ports of entry.

Having grown up in southern Arizona, I know the importance of cross-border security, trade and travel for my state, and the entire nation. Our ports along the Southwest Border play a critical role in facilitating trade and ensuring the safety, prosperity, and economic security of the American people.

The United States shares strong economic and cultural ties with Mexico, and any disruption to this relationship has adverse effects on investment, employment, productivity, and competitiveness. The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly created new challenges and the closure of the border to non-essential travel has seriously hurt local border communities.

Our ports are also the key link to securing our border. Most seizures of illicit drugs at our border happen at ports of entry. It is critical that we ensure we are making the right security investments at our ports of entry. Our nation must slow the flow of illegal goods and drugs through our ports of entry, while also maintaining the efficient flow of trade and travel. Technology, including Non-Intrusive Inspection (NII), can play a critical role in that effort.

As always, the key part of improved border security is a strong border workforce. Our port officers have worked the past year in challenging circumstance in the midst of a global pandemic. I honor their efforts and know they bring an important perspective on how to improve port operations.

I hope today’s hearing can help us re-focus our border security discussions back toward ports of entry. I want to start gathering a new baseline

understanding of the current challenges for our Southwest border ports and discuss the appropriate technology, infrastructure, and personnel investments needed.

I am pleased to have a strong panel of non-governmental experts on our witness panel today who bring important expertise on workforce, trade and security issues. Later this summer, I hope to hold a follow-on hearing to get the viewpoints of the Department of Homeland Security.