



Testimony  
of

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## **Introduction**

Chairman Paul, Ranking Member Peters, and distinguished Members of the Committee: Thank you for the invitation to appear today to discuss the critical work U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is doing around the clock to carry out President Donald J. Trump's agenda to keep Americans safe, restore order to our communities, and return the rule of law to this country. I stand before you today with immense pride to represent the dedicated patriots who have answered the call to serve their Nation. These men and women do not just hold a job; they hold the line, saving American lives. They unapologetically enforce the laws of the United States, and they do so with a courage that humbles me every single day.

Under the leadership of President Trump and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Kristi Noem, the men and women of ICE have been empowered to do exactly what they were trained to do: arrest and remove illegal aliens and criminals from our communities. We are enhancing public safety, securing our national security, and finally restoring integrity to an immigration system that had been allowed to collapse. While all illegal aliens are eligible for removal, we have prioritized and removed tens of thousands of the "worst of the worst" – known dangerous criminals, known or suspected terrorists, and gang members who threaten our neighborhoods.

We have supercharged partnerships with state and local law enforcement, empowering officers around the country, under the authorities given to us by Congress through the 287(g) program, to help ICE identify and remove criminal aliens from the United States. Those partnerships have increased more than 900% since President Trump took office, and our communities are safer for it. We encourage more agencies and departments around the country to partner with us in this noble effort.

I am also proud of the agency's unprecedented hiring campaign that led to ICE hiring more than 12,000 officers and agents in less than a year, after more than 220,000 individuals submitted applications. This expansion of our well-trained and well-vetted workforce will further support ICE's ability to execute on the President and the Secretary's bold agenda to enforce our laws and remove illegal aliens.

## **A Deadly Operating Environment**

Before discussing our broader operations, I must address the situation in Minnesota and the dangers that ICE agents face nationwide. While investigations remain ongoing, I am encouraged that some Minnesota officials are finally signaling a willingness to cooperate with ICE. But let me be clear: promises are not enough. We need action. The anti-ICE rhetoric from public officials not just in Minnesota but throughout the country has fomented violence against dedicated American patriots defending our homeland, and this must stop.

In the wake of the unprecedented border chaos of the previous Administration, ICE has stepped into the breach to enforce the law. This commitment has come at a cost. Our increased

enforcement has been met with a surge in threats, assaults, and doxing incidents against our employees.

We are facing the deadliest operating environment in our agency's history. ICE personnel, not to mention their families, are under assault like never before in this country. In Fiscal Year 2025, death threats against ICE personnel increased by more than 8,000 percent. Assaults on our officers have skyrocketed by over 1,400 percent. One officer in Minnesota had his finger bitten off by a left-wing protestor, egged on by elected officials characterizing our officers as the "gestapo" or "secret police." The families of ICE personnel have been made to feel unsafe in their own homes simply because their loved ones have the courage to enforce the laws passed by this Congress. Notably, those criticizing ICE and encouraging this violence against our officers and their families were silent amid the horrors perpetrated by cartels and human traffickers due to a lack of immigration enforcement under the Biden Administration.

I know this reality firsthand. My own family has been targeted. But let me send a message to anyone who thinks they can intimidate us: You will fail.

### **The Results of ICE's Increased Immigration Enforcement Operations**

Despite these perils, our officers continue to execute their mission with unwavering resolve. And we are only getting started. ICE remains committed to the fundamental principle that those who illegally enter our country must be held accountable.

Since the beginning of the second Trump Administration, we have achieved historic results. From January 20, 2025, through January 20, 2026, ICE conducted nearly 379,000 arrests. Among these arrested were more than 7,300 suspected gang members and 1,400 known or suspected terrorists. We have taken these dangerous individuals off our streets, making our country dramatically safer.

The President tasked us with mass deportations, and we are fulfilling that mandate. Thanks to the resources provided by Congress, we are ramping up detention capacity and removal flights daily. In the last year alone, we conducted over 475,000 removals. We are not just inflating statistics by counting border turnarounds; these are real removals of individuals with no lawful basis to remain in the United States.

### **Dismantling TCOs and Ending Atrocities Against Children**

It is a brutal reality that illegal immigration today is entirely organized by sophisticated, ruthless Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs). This includes the cartels and transnational gangs that President Trump has rightfully designated as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs). For too long, these terrorist groups have effectively controlled our southern border, deciding who enters, what enters, and at what price. These organizations treat human beings as cargo and American laws as mere suggestions. The only way to defeat them is to destroy their revenue stream.

Within Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), our special agents are delivering critical outcomes in the fight against transnational crime. We are seizing fentanyl before it kills our children and dismantling the networks that poison our communities. In FY 2025 alone, we seized more than 2.5 million pounds of narcotics—a 53 percent increase from the previous year and a critical blow to TCO revenues. And, HSI criminal arrests are at their highest point in HSI history.

However, our approach is not just about enforcement; it is about restoring order and dignity to many human beings who have been sold a lie by smugglers and exploited by these TCOs. Nowhere is the mission more urgent, or the history more horrifying, than in the protection of children. We must confront the atrocities that were allowed to fester under the previous Administration. In August 2024, the DHS Office of Inspector General released a report that details a campaign of negligence against the most vulnerable among us.

The report concluded that more than 291,000 Unaccompanied Alien Children (UACs)—out of nearly 450,000 transferred from DHS to the Department of Health and Human Services' custody—were simply "lost" by the system. These children were not just misplaced files; they were human beings abandoned to cartels and traffickers. By failing to issue Notices to Appear or locating minors who missed appearances, the Biden-Harris Administration effectively surrendered them to traffickers and forced labor rings. We are talking about children exploited in factories, abused in illicit sex trades, and living in indentured servitude on American soil. This was a moral stain on our Nation and one of the greatest humanitarian tragedies in our history, fueled by a refusal to enforce the law.

HSI is now leading the charge to find them. We have conducted more than 71,000 field engagements to locate children, verify sponsor legitimacy, and uncover criminal activity related to exploitation and trafficking. These operations have involved comprehensive criminal investigations, intelligence gathering, and close coordination with Federal, state, and local partners to identify fraudulent sponsors, dismantle trafficking networks, and pursue individuals who prey on vulnerable children. Since February 2025, HSI has:

- Arrested over 500 criminal sponsors for offenses including child sexual exploitation, forced labor, identity fraud, immigration violations, and aggravated assault;
- Dismantled more than 2,400 human smuggling operations, including nearly 730 criminal prosecutions related to human smuggling, human trafficking, immigration violations, and child exploitation; and
- Reached 45 million people nationwide through public awareness campaigns focused on preventing child trafficking and sponsor fraud.

Incredibly, under President Trump's leadership, HSI special agents and others within DHS law enforcement and the Department of Health and Human Services have also located more than 145,000 UACs who the Biden Administration lost – many of them exploited, trafficked, and abused.

ICE deportations break the back of the TCO business model that relies on this trafficking and the abuse and neglect of our legal system. When illegal entry no longer serves as a meaningful method to plant operatives in the United States and to transport humans and product across our borders, these criminal networks lose their sources and methods of profit. By removing illegal aliens from the interior and rectifying the Biden Administration's failures, ICE is not just enforcing the law; we are dismantling a machinery of human misery and protecting those who were victimized by criminals taking advantage of the prior Administration's refusal to enforce the law.

Further, through the President's "Project Homecoming" and our Incentivized Voluntary Departure pilot program, we are offering individuals the right to self-deport with dignity. This program allows aliens to return to their home countries on their own terms, without the stigma of a forced removal order. Crucially, by choosing this dignified path, they preserve the chance of coming back to the country the legal way in the future. We are sending a clear message: Do not trust the TCOs with your life. Respect our laws, return home with dignity, and keep the door open to a lawful future.

### **Homeland Security Task Forces (HSTFs) and Illicit Finance**

To further ensure these TCOs can never threaten our Nation again, President Trump directed the establishment of the Homeland Security Task Forces (HSTFs). The HSTFs represent the most aggressive, coordinated attack on TCOs in history. Our mandate is clear: dismantle the FTO-designated cartels and transnational gangs root and branch.

A critical pillar of the HSTF mission is targeting the illicit financing that fuels this violence. Under the direct umbrella of the HSTFs, we have established the Cross-Border Financial Crime Center. This Center is the tip of the spear in our financial war against the TCOs.

Through the Cross-Border Finance Crime Center, we have developed and implemented a targeted strategy to combat rampant fraud involving government programs in Minnesota and across the United States. Using this strategy, HSI has opened numerous criminal investigations into complex fraud schemes that have resulted in the theft of billions of taxpayer dollars. HSI is working side-by-side with federal partners to identify those responsible and aggressively recover hard-earned taxpayer funds. We are cutting off the money, cutting off the supply, and cutting off the leadership. We will not rest until these criminal organizations are destroyed.

### **Sanctuary Cities**

Much of the fight that ICE faces in keeping Americans safe is fueled by so-called "Sanctuary Cities." The concept of a "Sanctuary City" is a dangerous lie. These jurisdictions do not provide sanctuary for immigrants; they provide a shield for criminals. When a local jail refuses to honor an ICE detainer and releases a predator back onto the street, they are not protecting their community – they are endangering it. They are complicit in every future crime that individual commits. We are seeing the impact of these reckless policies in real-time, where innocent

Americans are victimized by individuals who should have been deported. Worse yet, many of these sanctuary jurisdictions provide financial benefits and incentives to these illegal immigrants at the direct expense of the American taxpayer. In our last election, Americans voted unequivocally for support for immigration enforcement. There is no right to obstruct federal law enforcement that the American people voted for by force or by policy, and we will use every tool available to hold these jurisdictions accountable and protect the American people.

### **Congressional Access to ICE Facilities**

We have achieved these outcomes while maintaining transparency. Under President Trump's leadership, and consistent with Secretary Noem's guidance, ICE supported more than triple the annual number of congressional facility visits compared to the past 10 years. As of January 8, 2026, due to the rise in political violence, we are enforcing strict security protocols for these visits to ensure the safety of our staff, the detainees, and Members of Congress themselves, consistent with all court orders.

Even though these visits pull enforcement personnel away from arresting and removing illegal aliens, including dangerous criminals and those with final orders of removal, ICE supported more than 150 such visits between January 20 and September 30, 2025. We stand by our world-class detention operation as we expand it to remove historic numbers of illegal aliens.

### **ICE Will Continue to Execute Its Longstanding, Statutory Mission**

My agency, ICE, exists to enforce America's longstanding immigration and customs laws. These laws are grounded in common sense, national sovereignty, and simple morality. Our officers and agents enforce them without hesitation and without apology.

The men and women of ICE are dedicated, hardworking, and unmatched in their professionalism. They are the shield that protects our communities. I ask that all members of this Committee treat them with the profound respect they have earned.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.