

**Opening Statement**  
**Hearing before the Government Operations and Border Management Subcommittee**  
**Wednesday, April 28<sup>th</sup> at 2:30 pm**

**“The Non-Governmental Organization Perspective on the Southwest Border.”**

Thank you, Senator Sinema.

I’m looking forward to working with you this Congress on this subcommittee. I know this hearing will be the first of many that will look at the security threats and process of our border management.

Thank you to our witnesses who I am sure will bring insight to the humanitarian crisis at our Southwest border

The March 2021 Southwest Land Border Encounters report from U.S. Customs and Border Protection paints an alarming picture. CBP encountered more than 172,000 migrants in the month of March alone, and nearly 570,000 migrants this fiscal year – to put that in perspective that is more than the entire population of the city of Tulsa in my home state of Oklahoma. The Preliminary data for April 2021 shows that we are continuing to see a surge of migrants crossing our border.

The number of unaccompanied children (UACs) crossing our border is currently on track to reach a 20-year high. In March 2021, CBP apprehended nearly 19,000 UACs. This historic surge of UACs is straining the resources of CBP and of the Office of Refugee Resettlement at an alarming rate.

The Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) appearing today are working hard alongside our government to address this crisis. Many of the advocates working with these NGOs are living out their faith and working to provide food and shelter to the most vulnerable.

While I’m grateful for the people, NGOs, churches, and religious communities that are serving people in this crisis, I am concerned about the broader series of policy decisions that created this crisis in the first place.

President Biden and his Administration on Day 1 began rolling back many of the policies President Trump put in place during a similar surge in 2019. These policies strengthened our security and stabilized our border. The policies now enrich the human trafficking cartels and put thousands of people in danger.

I took trips to the Southwest border during the 2019 crisis and during the ongoing crisis this year. As these pictures clearly show, things are much worse now than they were during the 2019 crisis.

The problems leading to this crisis are complex. Cartel violence, human trafficking and smuggling, the narcotics trade, depressed economies, the coronavirus pandemic, and slow economic growth in many Northern Triangle countries are leading migrants to take the journey north to our border for economic opportunities and to connect with family.

Addressing these problems requires a whole-of-government approach – We must build capacity in these countries, strengthen regional security, disrupt the transnational criminal organizations that fuel the violence, strengthen our border security, and provide for smart reforms to our asylum system and immigration laws.

This Congress, I look forward to working with Senator Sinema and my colleagues across the aisle to strengthen our country's border security, ensure better and more effective border management, and find constructive solutions to fix our broken asylum program and immigration laws.

Thank you for appearing before our committee today. I yield back, and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses this afternoon.