

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery by Chair Maggie Hassan
Emerging Threats and Spending Oversight Subcommittee Hearing:
Addressing the Evolving Threat of Illegal Drug Trafficking to Our Communities
March 14, 2022**

Good morning. I'm Senator Maggie Hassan, Chair of the Emerging Threats and Spending Oversight subcommittee on the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, and I would like to welcome you to our field hearing examining the evolving threat of drug trafficking in New Hampshire and communities across the United States.

Too often, the drugs flowing into New Hampshire originate outside our country – and cross into the United States at our southern border. I have visited the southern border several times as a senator, where law enforcement officials discussed with me how drug cartels smuggle drugs into the country. Those same drugs end up here in the Granite State – and that is one of many reasons why we must secure our southern border, making sure that our border security and law enforcement personnel have the resources and support that they need.

As a member of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, I have worked with my colleagues from both parties on solutions to strengthen border security and ensure that we target illegal drug trafficking, increase investments in border security technology, and improve infrastructure for Border Patrol stations and land ports of entry.

As part of those efforts, we have invested billions in border security infrastructure and technology to gain operational control of the southern border, including \$3 billion for Border Patrol stations and land ports of entry in the bipartisan infrastructure deal that I helped negotiate and pass into law last year. To give Customs and Border Protection agents the support that they need, I supported hiring thousands more agents and investing in personnel and training. And I helped introduce a bill that was signed into law to crack down on illegal drug trafficking by equipping Customs and Border Protection with state-of-the-art technology to detect fentanyl.

We know that we have more work to do. That is why today we will hear from our witnesses about how criminal organizations use ever-evolving smuggling tactics to evade detection, and about the work of law enforcement and border security agencies to stop drug trafficking. We will also discuss what additional measures Congress can take to support law enforcement and promote counter-narcotics programs to help make our communities safer.

Our hearing will address the ongoing threat of heroin, fentanyl, and opioid trafficking, and will also address the rising threat that methamphetamine poses to our communities. Methamphetamine has contributed to increasing incidents of violent crime and dangerous encounters with community members and law enforcement, in addition to overdose deaths.

Much of the fentanyl and methamphetamine trafficked to New Hampshire is manufactured in Mexico using precursor chemicals that often come from China. Most of it is then smuggled over the southern border into the United States.

From there, criminals will smuggle in drugs north, across state lines, and eventually deliver them to New Hampshire. National and state borders mean little to the criminal organizations trafficking drugs. That is why close coordination and cooperation between federal, state, and local law enforcement is the key to stopping trafficking and preventing these drugs from reaching our communities.

So I am pleased to be joined today by regional officials from the Drug Enforcement Administration, Homeland Security Investigations, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection, as well as state officials from the New Hampshire Drug Task Force and the Investigative Services Bureau of the New Hampshire State Police.

The Drug Enforcement Administration leads our country's efforts to stop drug trafficking, including coordinating with federal, state, and local partners including here in New Hampshire. Homeland Security Investigations leads Border Enforcement Security Task Forces to support federal, state, and local efforts and provide specialized training to state and local partners. Customs and Border Protection secures and operates the border, including deploying new scanning technology to detect drugs at ports of entry and piloting drone detection and interception technologies to stop drones used to smuggle drugs across the border.

The New Hampshire Drug Task Force helps local police departments with counter-narcotics investigations while also serving as a bridge to federal law enforcement. And the New Hampshire State Police serves on the frontlines, protecting our communities and overseeing the Granite Shield program that promotes coordination among state, local, and federal agencies on counter-narcotics operations.

These agencies all work together to target illegal drug trafficking, and I look forward to our discussion today about how we can continue to improve coordination and provide critical resources and support to protect New Hampshire communities.

I want to thank all of our witnesses for their service to New Hampshire and our country, and for being here today.