

**Hon. Greg Stanton**

**AZ-04**

Chairman Joyce, Ranking Member Cuellar, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on issues that are critically important to my state of Arizona.

Arizona has been on the front lines of the border crisis. In just the first four months of this fiscal year, Border Patrol in the Tucson Sector apprehended more than 250,000 migrants – the highest number on record.

This February, I was at the border in Nogales, Arizona. I spoke with Customs and Border Patrol leadership, staff from the migrant services providers, and business and trade leaders from both Arizona and Sonora, Mexico.

In Nogales, I spoke with Customs and Border Protection agents at the Mariposa Port of Entry, and with Border Patrol in the field. The CPB's Director of Field Operations for the Tucson Sector said their number one ask was more resources, more manpower, and better technology.

I appear before you today to raise their asks before this subcommittee. Congress must deliver more resources, retain more CBP staff and invest in innovative technology.

The recently passed FY24 spending bill took important steps to fund 22,000 border patrol agents, and appropriate \$75.5 million to acquire additional non-intrusive inspection detection systems, \$20 million for an additional 150 CBP Officers to support counter fentanyl efforts, and \$650 million for the Shelter and Services Program.

This subcommittee understands that we need more boots on the ground at the border. But we must ensure that we can recruit and retain these officers. On average, it takes 400 days for CBP to hire personnel. That's why I introduced bipartisan legislation with Rep. Juan Ciscomani to improve CBP's flexibility in hiring, recruiting, and retaining agents, officers, and employees, specifically in rural and remote areas. But this cannot fall off our radar as we look to FY25, and I ask my colleagues on this subcommittee to continue to prioritize funding for the hiring and retention of CBP officers.

Arizona is no stranger to the impacts of being under resourced. In December of last year, the Lukeville Port of Entry was closed for a month as DHS redirected all Customs and Border Protection staff to assist in processing an unprecedented surge of migrant arrivals. The closure of the port negatively impacted economies of both Arizona and Mexico during one of the busiest months for cross-border commerce and tourism.

The economic impact of supporting our ports is undeniable. Last year alone, CBP processed \$32 trillion in trade and collected \$90 billion for the U.S. government.

Mexican visitors spend \$11 million in Arizona a day. We must provide funding for DHS to maintain operations at ports of entry and minimize delays of commerce flow between

countries. Mexico is now our number one trading partner—beating out China—so we need the resources to keep our ports of entries open and staffed.

Access to cutting-edge technology at our border is critical to disrupt the flow of fentanyl. Deaths related to the use of illicit fentanyl and other synthetic opioids have risen by nearly 200% in the past decade. And much of the fentanyl is being made by cartels just across the border. I ask this committee prioritize the purchase of more non-intrusive inspection detection systems, providing the funding needed to install systems, and hire additional personnel to support counter fentanyl efforts.

Arizona is a national model for responding to migrant surges, but the allocation of Shelter and Services Program (SSP) dollars to Arizona has been disproportionate. Last year, the Southern Arizona Coalition—a group of cities, counties, and NGOs—was only eligible to apply for \$12 million in assistance through the SSP, while New York received nearly nine times that amount.

Without SSP dollars, local governments and NGO's simply cannot continue to fund their response—leaving no other option than chaotic street releases in cities and towns along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Not only does SSP funding to border communities limit the chaos in communities along the southern border, but it also reduces the impact to interior cities and states.

Organizations like Tucson's Casa Alitas provide essential services that help asylum-

seekers find sponsors—so that migrants arrive in interior cities with a travel plan and a place to stay as they await adjudication of their cases, relieving the burden on their city services.

I urge the subcommittee to provide robust SSP funding in FY25 that prioritizes border communities.

I cannot underscore enough how critical funding is to border states. I urge the subcommittee to invest in the resources, staff, and technology that border communities rely on. Arizonans face the realities of a broken immigration system every day—we must ensure that the federal government provides the funding needed to ease this burden and keep our communities safe.

Thank you again for your attention to these issues.