

To: Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies (CJS) Appropriations Subcommittee
Date: Tuesday, March 24, 2025
From: The Honorable Sylvia R. Garcia (D-TX-29)
Re: Member Testimony for CJS Appropriations Subcommittee Member Day

Thank you, Mr. Chair, Ranking Member, and Committee Members, for the opportunity to provide written testimony for the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Member Day.

This is an important opportunity for Members of the House of Representatives to advocate for our constituents, highlight funding priorities, and help shape the appropriations process for Fiscal Year 2027.

As such, I would like to highlight key programmatic and language requests that I have submitted to the Subcommittee that would make a significant impact on the lives of my constituents in the Texas 29th Congressional District.

These requests represent significant investments that will protect our constituents from extreme heat by collecting to help inform our response plans amid increasing heat waves. I also want to emphasize the importance of protecting immigrants and ensuring they have a fair and legal process towards documented status. Lastly, my requests aim to protect victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking

That is why I urge Members to support the allocation of \$6,000,000 to expand the scope of impact-based forecast planning in the HeatRisk initiative of the National Integrated Heat Health Information System (NIHHIS). The funds shall be used to support the expansion and enhancement

of forecasting initiatives including staff support for integrating healthcare and public health surveillance data including EMS data, morbidity and mortality data, patient transport and transfer data, medical supply usage data, hospital admission data, and ICD-10 data from the Department of Health and Human Services and NIHHS partner agencies; interagency integration within NIHHS partner agencies of impact-based forecast data to identify activation thresholds for deployment of assets and personnel to respond to heat events; and improving utility among SLTT entities through outreach by regional coordination structures of NIHHS and its partner agencies.

In addition, I strongly urge members to fully fund the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR). The primary mission of the EOIR is to adjudicate immigration cases by fairly, expeditiously, and uniformly interpreting and administering the nation's immigration laws. EOIR must hire highly qualified, diverse immigration judges to ensure the adjudication process is impartial and consistent with due process. We must also uphold the right to representation by supporting and funding EOIR to provide legal representation for non-citizens in removal proceedings.

Everyone deserves the right to fair representation, regardless of their citizenship status or socioeconomic status. That is why I support the highest possible funding for the Legal Services Corporation (LSC). LSC is a private, nonprofit corporation established to promote equal access to justice and to provide grants for high-quality civil legal assistance to low-income individuals. LSC grants help the most vulnerable people, including families facing unlawful evictions or foreclosures and women seeking protection from abuse. With state, local, pro bono, and private sources underfunded, LSC is critical to closing the access to justice gap.

These investments will also bolster our legal system by increasing access to legal services and addressing the backlog of our judicial system. Congress can begin by investing a total of \$9 million for Transitional Housing Assistance Grants for Victims of Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, or Stalking, which focuses on a holistic, survivor-centered approach to providing transitional housing services that move individuals into permanent housing. In addition, the Students, Teachers, and Officers Preventing School Violence Act of 2018 (STOP School Violence Act of 2018) needs to be fully funded to provide the Bureau of Justice Assistance with the authority to award grants to states, local governments, and Indian tribes for evidence-based school violence prevention, suicide prevention and mental health crisis intervention programming.

We must also continue to protect against and stop violence against women. There are already productive and impactful programs available, and we must ensure they receive the funding necessary to continue their work. For example, the STOP Grant Program, one of the most far-reaching VAWA programs, is at the core of effective coordinated community responses to domestic violence and sexual assault, which helps hundreds of thousands of victims find safety and receive services every year while holding thousands of perpetrators Accountable for their actions. That is why I urge members to support total funding for this program at \$326 million to support its efforts to protect victims.

I also request the highest possible funding to culturally specific organizations to reach survivors in communities of color who face barriers in accessing services. In addition to women, I request

\$100 million for the Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP), which provides federal funding dedicated entirely to the provision of direct services for all victims of sexual violence. SASP formula funding is awarded to states, territories, and tribes to provide services to adult and minor sexual assault victims and their families.

Lastly, my requests will contribute to our nation's scientific advancements, strengthen worker protection and civil rights, and protect our constituents from gun violence. To ensure America's leadership in space exploration, Congress must support a total funding level of \$6 million for space grants.

Specifically, this money should be allocated to NASA's Artemis Program and supporting Mars Future Missions. NASA's Artemis Program funds the United State' goals of returning to the Lunar surface by 2027 to expand exploration capabilities. NASA'S Mars Future Missions focuses on developing future robotic and human space exploration.

Lastly, I urge members to support funding the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission at \$488.221 million to ensure that the Commission can remain dedicated to preventing and addressing employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, and gender identity), national origin, age, disability, and genetic information. Providing at least \$488,221,000 in FY2027 will allow the EEOC to enforce the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, resume pay data collection and fulfill its other responsibilities.

As you can see, the Commerce, Justice, and Science Subcommittee is an important one that provides Americans across the nation with important services, worker rights protection, and heat mitigation programs. We must continue to ensure all programs are funded to the fullest extent possible to better serve all of our constituents.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my written testimony. I look forward to working with all the Members of the Subcommittee in advancing these priorities that are not only important to my district, but also to working families, children, and seniors across our great nation.