

Chairman, Ranking Member, distinguished members of the Oversight Committee Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. It's a privilege.

As a former Chief of Staff of Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE), Former Deputy Chief of Staff at DHS Office of Intelligence & Analysis (I&A), and a Senior Advisor at Customs and Border Protection (CBP) within the Department of Homeland Security, I'm deeply honored to speak before this committee. My experiences have afforded me a unique vantage point from which to witness the dedication and resilience of the men and women who serve in our immigration enforcement agencies.

First, I'm testifying today as a private citizen expert, not an administration or government official. My views and opinions are my own and do not reflect the opinions of the Presidential Administration, DHS, Immigration & Customs Enforcement, or the Government.

Our nation faces a myriad of immigration and national security challenges. From managing the flow of migrants at our borders to addressing the humanitarian needs of those seeking refuge within our borders to removing those without a legal basis to remain, the complexities of immigration enforcement are vast and multi-faceted. I pray daily for the men and women working within our security agencies, and I am grateful for their sacrifice.

In my personal view, built upon my professional work, the mission of DHS is paramount to protecting national security and public safety by enforcing our immigration laws with integrity and professionalism. The men and women of DHS carry out this mission with unwavering dedication, often in the face of daunting challenges and difficult circumstances. That is why having the opportunity to support the men and women of DHS was and will always be one of my proudest moments.

I would be remiss if I did not recognize the honorable service of Alejandro Mayorkas, the Secretary of Homeland Security. Secretary Mayorkas has consistently demonstrated a steadfast commitment to upholding the rule of law, maintaining order, and safeguarding American values. Despite the inevitable political pressures that come with his role, Secretary Mayorkas has remained a stalwart advocate for the men and women of our immigration enforcement agencies, ensuring they have the support and resources necessary to carry out their mission effectively.

Let me state clearly that law enforcement agencies like ICE are critical to maintaining order and security within our borders. They are tasked with upholding the rule of law and ensuring that our immigration system operates fairly, justly, and consistently with our nation's values. I have also seen in my professional career the strength, courage, compassion, and discretion that ICE officers apply daily - without caving to political pressure or bias.

However, the current state of our immigration system is broken. Outdated policies, inadequate resources, and a lack of legislative reforms over time have left our immigration enforcement agencies struggling to keep pace with the ever-evolving landscape of immigration enforcement.

There are currently multiple humanitarian crises across the Western Hemisphere, which exacerbate these challenges. Economic instability, political turmoil, and rampant violence in countries like Venezuela, Honduras, Haiti, and Guatemala are driving thousands of desperate individuals to seek refuge in the United States - the everlasting beacon of hope and freedom. We must in partnership with our allies across the hemisphere, solve the issues that are driving these refugees from their homes.

Notably, many of the solutions to decrease encounters at our Southern Border, expanding legal pathways for asylum seekers - which is an immediate need - while also mitigating disruptive migratory flows across the Hemisphere are not within the sole or primary purview of the Department of Homeland Security, nor is it solely a matter of domestic immigration enforcement. DHS has little authority to affect the push factors driving refugees and migrants to our borders.

Moreover, it is imperative to recognize that those who seek refuge in the United States and embrace the values of American life should be welcomed as a testament to the enduring allure of freedom and opportunity that our nation represents.

The U.S. government must uphold its asylum obligations and ensure that our immigration system provides a fair and accessible process. At the same time, it is equally crucial to safeguard against those who seek to exploit the system for nefarious purposes, endangering the safety and security of Americans. Upholding the integrity of our immigration system while extending a helping hand to those who genuinely require it is a delicate balance – but not impossible – and it's essential to preserving the values upon which our country was founded.

Despite the gravity of these humanitarian issues, in my personal view, our immigration enforcement agencies are often caught in the crossfire of political gamesmanship. Instead of receiving the support and resources they need to carry out their mission effectively, they are subjected to politicization and scapegoating, making it increasingly difficult to fulfill their duty to protect our nation's security and uphold the rule of law.

Concerning this hearing's focus, I'm grateful for the Committee's concerns and focus on alternatives to detention. The operational needs of DHS, the development of non-custodial oversight, and the management of noncitizens within our immigration system are critical. It's imperative to address the operational complexities CBP and ICE face concerning the detention and release of noncitizens. While detention is necessary for national security, public safety, flight

risk, and other operational reasons, it is crucial to recognize the importance of alternative detention (ATD). Alternatives such as electronic monitoring, case management, or community-based programs can be effective in ensuring compliance with immigration proceedings while also respecting the dignity and rights of individuals.

Maybe as importantly, these alternatives can alleviate the strain on detention facilities and resources, allowing CBP and ICE to focus on higher-priority cases - including human smuggling, drug trafficking, national security threats, and other illicit criminal activity. Developing and implementing robust alternatives to detention programs are essential to a humane and effective immigration enforcement strategy.

Supporting law enforcement, maintaining order in our immigration system, and supporting the virtues of those desiring the American way of life are not mutually exclusive goals. We can and must pursue policies that are both compassionate and effective. This requires a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of migration, enhances border security, and provides a fair and accessible process for those seeking asylum and refuge within our borders.

As we confront the challenges of immigration policy and operations, we must do so with a spirit of bipartisanship and collaboration. The stakes are too high for us to allow partisan politics to stand in the way of progress.

In closing, I express my continued admiration for the men and women of ICE, CBP, and the entire Department of Homeland Security. They serve our country with courage, integrity, and professionalism. Indeed, they are the backbone of our immigration enforcement efforts, and we must support them in their mission.

Thank you again for the opportunity.