Charles Marino Testimony on "Case by Case: Returning Parole to Its Proper Purpose"

Chairman Green, Ranking Member Thompson, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear today to testify on the necessity of thorough vetting of migrants entering the country on Parole, aka Temporary Protected Status, to ensure the homeland security of the United States and the safety of the American public.

As a former career official within the Department of Homeland Security, working under both Republican and Democratic leadership to help protect the country by creating and implementing homeland security policies and programs, I am keenly aware of the ever-present dynamics between politics and the creation of national security strategy, especially in the areas of border security and immigration enforcement.

I continue part of my work in national security today as the founder and CEO of Sentinel, and by sharing my knowledge and experience with students, as an Adjunct Professor at the University of South Carolina, teaching future generations the impact of politics on the development of national security strategy.

The Threat Environment & Vetting of Migrants

The current volume of threats against the United States remains robust in volume, more diverse in type, and originates from more places than at any other time in our history.

While the threat environment is constantly evolving, what must remain consistent as an essential foundation to secure the homeland is the indisputable need for border security, immigration enforcement, and thorough end-to-end vetting of those entering the U.S. under lawful programs like asylum and

parole necessary to prevent criminal and terrorist threats from entering the country.

We must further ensure that these programs are not corrupted and exploited by politics and those wishing to do harm to Americans. I believe we would all agree that the safety and security of the American public must always remain paramount.

As a case study for what can and will go wrong when politics overtakes sound homeland security policies, we have no further to look than the last four years and the threats that have entered the country via the CHNV TPS program from the countries of Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, & Venezuela.

A program ripe with fraud committed by terrorist groups, gangs, cartels, & nation states, combined with the inability of the U.S. to thoroughly vet the backgrounds of those who

entered the country, unnecessarily increased our public safety and terrorism threat level exponentially. All while Americans were assured by the previous administration that all refugees arriving in the country had been thoroughly vetted.

As obvious facts today demonstrate, that could not be further from the truth, because it was never possible. The fact is, vetting is only as good as the systems the U.S. is vetting against, and the truth is that many countries either don't have systems in place to maintain derogatory information on individuals as we do, they refuse to share that information with us, or the information cannot be verified or trusted.

Simply put, this means that if an individual from another country has not been encountered by U.S. or ally countries law enforcement, intelligence, or military agencies, there will be no record of that person with U.S. authorities.

This is what has allowed cartels, gangs, and suspected terrorists to enter the country under these programs. Additionally, on the back end of these programs, sponsor & residential information listed for migrants was also not consistently verified. It is what caused the CHNV program to be paused under the Biden admin when it was discovered by the Inspector General that the same "3,000 sponsors" were listed for approximately 500,000 parolees, with bogus names and residences.

In fact, according to a recent DHS OIG report entitled "DHS Does Not Have Assurance That All Migrants Can be Located Once Released into the United States" "... of 981,671 migrant records documented by USBP from March 2021 through August 2022, addresses for more than 177,000 migrant records were either missing, invalid for delivery, or not legitimate residential

locations." So now not only do we not know the full

backgrounds of many migrants, but we also don't know where

they ARE within the country! An obvious recipe for disaster.

As we all know, the U.S. Border Patrol's has encountered

hundreds of people on the Terrorist Screening Database (TSDB)

at the southern and northern borders the last four years. So,

we naturally must ask how many on that list many have made it

in via TPS or Asylum claims?

Recently more than a dozen Uzbekistan nationals,

smuggled in by a suspect with connections to ISIS, were

released into the United States. Some are now missing, just as

are many of those from the Afghanistan withdrawal debacle

who were ushered onto our soil without thorough vetting.

If we are going to extend TPS eligibility to countries, we

must ensure that the ability to vet migrants from that country is

intact, both within the country of origin and within the U.S. This cannot be a one-sided equation hoping that U.S. agencies will have information on everyone – it's not realistic and it's dangerous!

Further, with gangs and cartels transitioning in designation from Transnational Criminal Organizations to Foreign Terrorists Organizations, resources like the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) under the DNI will need to play a greater role with respect to intelligence and information sharing.

With an estimated 10-15 million migrants encountered on our borders, with a mind-boggling deportation rate of less than 10% overall; what is most concerning are the estimated 2 million "got aways" who have crossed into America without being detained. What we also know is *how* the most nefarious of them—from adversarial countries including China, Russia,

and Iran—are buying passage into the United States. They're going through Mexico's powerful cartels, whose businesses are booming! Through human trafficking and manipulation of legal programs.

Combined with the growing threat from nation state actors, terrorists groups, gangs, & cartels, the ability of terrorist cells to infiltrate our borders and exploit legal programs have culminated to create a perfect storm; If we don't take drastic action now, our nation's days of prosperity & safety — the very reason people by the millions risk their lives to come here—will come to an end.

There are Solutions

First and foremost, we must gain the will of Congress to use every asset, resource, capability, technology, and

diplomatic strategy to secure our borders and maintain the integrity of lawful pathways into the country.

We must also remember that programs like "asylum" and "parole" as the U.S. immigration law currently defines it, doesn't mean "an escape from poverty."

TPS was intended by Congress to be temporary, not to gain eventual amnesty. The overuse of TPS has added to the challenges.

Where thorough vetting is not possible, the U.S. must say no to providing TPS until reliable vetting programs can be established.

Enhanced coordination between DNI, DHS, DOJ, & State Dept re data sharing agreements w/ countries and vetting of migrants.

Accountability for abuse. What happened the last four years can never happen again, not in a post 9/11 America!

It is time to return to the intended statutory use of lawful pathways into the United States, while prioritizing the safety and security of the American public.

Thank you, and I am pleased to answer any questions that you may have.