

Today's hearing comes nearly one year after this Subcommittee held a joint field-hearing in McAllen, Texas with the Subcommittee on Health.

It presents a chance to re-evaluate the conditions at our southern border and the conditions have only further deteriorated since then.

The implications of the border crisis extends far beyond the border communities, impacting

every aspect of our nation. This crisis is not a political talking point; it's a real, widespread crisis with extensive repercussions.

In McAllen, Texas, I highlighted the unprecedented way this administration operates our borders. We have reached all-time highs with the number of migrants crossing the Southern border.

I further expressed concerns over President Biden's handling of the border, describing it as "brutal and unsustainable."

Since then, the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) have reported for FY23 an astounding 2.47 million encounters at the southwest border. This is a significant escalation from approximately 450,000 encounters in FY20.

In December 2023 alone, there was an estimated 302,000 migrant encounters at the southern border, the highest monthly total ever recorded.

This flood of migrants was seen during a visit by Congressional members to the southern border.

During this visit, some members visited a hospital in Eagle Pass, Texas, along the border that is currently providing care for illegal immigrants.

According to one of my colleagues, this hospital has a total of five ambulances, and one is permanently dedicated to solely transporting illegal immigrants.

Once in the hospital, these illegal migrants are prioritized over American citizens due to acuity concerns.

This is unfair to the citizens of this country and is directly due to the failure of the Biden Administration to secure our Southern border.

Sadly, this Administration seems to prioritize the health and the interests of illegal migrants over those of its own citizens.

Even Mayors of cities like New York and Chicago are now confronting the implications

and costs associated with the influx of illegal migrants that border communities have long dealt with.

These large cities are struggling to find the resources to address the problem.

New York has even started to force their children to sign up for online classes so they can house the illegal migrants at their school.

Additionally, the absence of effective border control has led to a significant influx of drugs, especially fentanyl and fentanyl analogues, into our communities.

A loophole cartels used prior to the temporarily listing of analogues to traffic fentanyl into our country was by creating fentanyl analogues to evade criminal laws.

Right now, fentanyl analogues are considered Schedule I substances, but only because of temporary scheduling orders, which expires on December 31st, 2024.

Rep. Latta and my bill, the HALT Fentanyl Act, passed the House with bipartisan support in May 2023. It would permanently schedule fentanyl analogues, while allowing for research into them.

Beyond fentanyl, the Administration's border policies have facilitated the abuse and exploitation of migrants, particularly children.

The *New York Times* has uncovered a rise in child labor trafficking, children as young as 13

being forced into dangerous jobs, often in violation of federal labor laws. This is done by the sponsors our government has placed them with. We've seen reports of severe injuries and even fatalities.

The *Times* reports that over 85,000 children entrusted to the HHS's care have seemingly vanished, lost in a system that fails to protect the most vulnerable.

This is due to the complete and utter failure of HHS to implement proper vetting processes that include detailed background checks

consisting of FBI background checks and fingerprinting.

In September 2023, HHS proposed a rule regarding unaccompanied minors. This rule does **little** to bolster the vetting process used to place these minors.

This rule makes the vetting process **optional** to examine living conditions, conduct background checks and interview the sponsors before a minor is placed with them. Further, the rule does **nothing** to address collaboration

between state and local law enforcement, school authorities or child welfare services when a child is placed with a sponsor.

In short, open borders not only endanger American lives but perpetuate criminal enterprises that exploit vulnerable individuals.

The Biden administration wants to ignore the crisis being caused by its border policies.

We had a hearing in July with the Secretary of HHS discussing the Office of Refugee Resettlement. The committee sent additional

questions for the record to the Secretary, and he still hasn't responded to our questions.

Yet another example of how this administration tries to ignore this crisis.

The situation at our southern border is simply unsustainable, it is affecting public safety, public health, and public education.

This should not be a Republican vs. Democrat issue. This is an American issue.