

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.**

***Hearing on “Threat to Every Community: Assessing the Safety, Health, and Economic
Consequences of President Biden’s Border Policies”***

January 17, 2024

It’s clear that an election year has begun. We all know that immigration reform is long overdue. But this hearing demonstrates that my Republican colleagues are in full-blown election mode – turning to scare tactics and fearmongering.

They entitled this hearing “A Threat to Every Community”—a suggestion that those who are crossing our border are somehow all violent criminals. Yes, we need to improve our immigration system, but the best way to tackle illegal immigration is to create a wider path to legal immigration. Suggesting that immigrants are some kind of threat to our society is nonsense. It only serves to further harmful and dangerous stereotypes. Republicans are once again putting politics over people – refusing once again to work with Democrats to fix our broken system.

Immigration reform is essential. Our economy relies on the innovation and hard work that immigrants bring to our country. We need more legal pathways to citizenship and a more efficient process that reduces the strain that we see at the border. And while I reject the notion that all immigrants at the border present a threat to our communities, we do need to make sure that our border patrol is adequately resourced so that they can focus on the actual security threats that they may encounter at the border.

But because House Republicans have failed to put forward anything resembling realistic immigration reform that could become law and really make a difference, they are now focused on impeaching the Secretary of Homeland Security. This is nothing but a waste of time and is being done purely for political revenge.

This Committee and its broad jurisdiction are essential to growing our economy, lowering costs for the consumers, and ensuring the health and well-being of Americans. We tackle some of the most complicated matters—health care, energy and the environment, telecommunications and the internet, and consumer protection. But what this Committee does not have jurisdiction over is border policy. Using this Committee to smear President Biden’s response to issues at the border is a blatant attempt to distract from the work that this Congress has failed to get done under Republican leadership.

Under Republican leadership, this Committee has failed to reauthorize the Pandemic and All Hazards Preparedness Act, failed to act on pipeline safety reauthorization, and failed to provide our public health institutions with the authorities they need to help alleviate harmful drug shortages. Those are some of the issues that we should be focused on addressing together, but

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instead Republicans continue to cave to the extreme elements of their party who have absolutely no interest in governing.

House Republicans' extreme approach to fixing the issues on the border are cruel, inhumane, and ineffective. They have also shown no interest in working with the Biden Administration to solve this problem. Time and time again, Republicans have ignored the Biden Administration's request for resources to secure the border in a serious and responsible way. President Biden has asked for funding for 1,300 more border agents, 1,000 more Customs and Border Protection Officers to focus on counter-fentanyl, 1,600 more Asylum Officers, and numerous more support staff and resources to humanely and effectively address migration along the southern border.

If Republican leadership were really interested in keeping Americans safe, our communities strong, our constituents healthy, and our economy growing, they would stop trying to slash the very federal agencies and programs that keep our country safe, healthy, and prosperous.

Again, House Republicans are not interested in bipartisan solutions to this issue. They prefer scare tactics to deflect from their failure to govern.

And with that, I yield back the balance of my time.