



U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

STATEMENT

OF

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**U.S. IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

**Regarding
The Fiscal Year 2021 President's Budget Request**

**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY**

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INTRODUCTION

Chairwoman Roybal-Allard, Ranking Member Fleischmann, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, it is an honor to appear before you today. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) promotes homeland security and public safety through the criminal and civil enforcement of more than 400 federal statutes, while focusing on immigration enforcement, preventing terrorism, and combatting the transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) that exploit the nation's trade, travel, and financial systems.

ICE appreciates this Committee's support for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 Supplemental Appropriations which allocated critical additional resources to provide medical care to the detained population. We also quickly operationalized the \$21 million provided to combat the criminal organizations behind the illegal smuggling of fraudulent families and exploitation of children being trafficked for this purpose. The FY 2020 enacted appropriation also benefited ICE in key mission and programmatic investment areas, such as the notable enhancement in attorneys and support staff, ensuring our law enforcement officers have available to them a vehicle fleet that is safe and reliable, and that our Service Processing Centers are properly maintained and are equipped to provide the necessary services. I seek to continue working with Congress and sustaining this positive working relationship for the betterment of the safety and security of our country. While the FY 2019 supplemental funding enabled the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to address the urgent humanitarian needs caused by the crisis, continued success in achieving our mission requires the right combination of trained and dedicated personnel, collaborative partnerships, advanced information technology capabilities, and investments in our critical infrastructure.

As you are aware, in FY 2019, DHS experienced an unprecedented humanitarian and border security crisis along the Southwest Border (SWB). During this time, the number of aliens apprehended at or near the SWB increased significantly; from October 1, 2018 through September 30, 2019, the U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) apprehended more than 851,000 aliens between SWB ports of entry, including more than 473,000 members of family units, more than 301,000 single adults, and more than 76,000 unaccompanied alien children (UAC). These numbers represented a 115 percent increase from FY 2018 and a higher number than any of the previous ten fiscal years. The increase in the number of aliens strained both CBP and ICE detention capacity and personnel resources. This presented an urgent need for additional detention beds, transportation expenses, as well as other critical resources necessary to care for a growing detained population.

With this in mind, I request your assistance in providing ICE the funding it needs to uphold our immigration laws humanely and effectively, to continue to protect national security and public safety, and to preserve the integrity of the global infrastructure through which legitimate trade, travel, and finance move. The President's FY 2021 Budget includes \$10.4 billion in net discretionary funding reflecting a \$2.0 billion increase over the FY 2020 enacted budget. This increase in funding is critical for ICE to meet its diverse and expansive mission needs.

The FY 2021 Budget will support ICE's criminal investigations and support our efforts to disrupt and dismantle transnational criminal organizations that prey upon vulnerable populations, engaging in human trafficking, smuggling, child exploitation, and narcotics trafficking while compromising the security of our border control efforts. Moreover, the budget will support current efforts and enable ICE to invest in much needed mission areas such as immigration enforcement,

care and custody of the detained population, and transportation and processing of aliens. Finally, the budget will facilitate workforce expansion and training, and the complementary information technology needed to meet the security challenges of the twenty-first century that threaten U.S. national security and public safety.

ENFORCING IMMIGRATION LAWS

Despite a decline from the peak number of apprehensions during the summer of FY 2019, DHS and ICE continue to grapple with the lasting effects of the border surge. ICE remains vigilant in our planning as border activity generally experiences seasonal spikes and a number of factors could trigger another border surge, including economic and political conditions in Central America and elsewhere around the world, as well as perceptions that those who enter the country illegally will be quickly released and be rendered immune from further enforcement. ICE projects that until fundamental changes are made to the immigration enforcement process—including legislation that addresses current legal loopholes that incentivize high levels of illegal migration—periodic surges at the border will continue, and the hundreds of thousands of cases that began during FY 2019 will continue to impact the entire immigration system for many years to come.

Even if no surge occurs along the border, the effects of the enormous number of illegal entries over the last two years will reverberate for years to come. Today, ICE's non-detained docket¹ includes a record 3.3 million cases, a steep increase from 2.6 million in FY 2018 and 2.4 million in FY 2017, with over a million of these aliens having already received final orders of removal. The Department of Justice's Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) issued roughly 181,000 final orders of removal in FY 2019 and approximately 70,000 final orders of removal in just the first quarter of FY 2020. As numbers continue to climb, they will further outpace ICE's ability to conduct its work identifying, apprehending, and detaining this staggering number prior to effecting removal. Unfortunately, ICE's inability to swiftly remove individuals so ordered by a federal judge weakens the integrity of the entire United States' immigration system, further adding to the misperception that there are no repercussions for illegally entering the United States and adds strength to this already significant pull factor. As a result, the administration's budget requests the law enforcement, attorney, and support staffing enhancements required to maintain the safety and security of our detained population, move cases in a timely fashion through the immigration court process, as well as to conduct enforcement actions to identify, arrest, and remove those who are illegally present and subject to removal.

The ICE Office of Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) primarily arrests aliens for civil violations of U.S. immigration law. In furtherance of this mission, it conducts enforcement actions based on intelligence-driven leads in communities nationwide (at-large arrests) and works with jails to identify aliens who are amenable to removal and who have been arrested by state or local authorities for criminal activity (custodial arrests). While ERO's immigration enforcement efforts are focused on the interior, the fluctuating and unpredictable situation at the Southwest Border directly impacts resource requirements in numerous ways.

The increase in migration in FY 2019 required ERO to redirect many of its enforcement resources, which has in turn negatively impacted the number of ERO's interior arrests, as well as the percentage of removals stemming from such arrests. In FY 2019, ERO's overall administrative

¹ Non-detained cases consist of active removal cases for aliens not in ICE custody.

arrests decreased by 10 percent from the last fiscal year, while administrative arrests of convicted criminals decreased by 12 percent, and at-large arrests decreased by 12 percent. Thus, while ERO continues to conduct enforcement in the interior of the United States, high levels of border apprehensions and limited resources have forced ICE to balance its support for border security with its interior public safety mission. Additionally, the increasing number of jurisdictions that refuse to cooperate with ICE's enforcement efforts continues to adversely affect the number of enforcement actions that ICE can take against removable aliens, especially those released from state or local law enforcement custody without notification to ICE. For those concerned with the safety and security of our communities, the impact of these sanctuary jurisdictions should give great pause. Book-ins resulting from ERO's Criminal Alien Program have continued to decrease, from 40,424 at this point in FY 2019, to 35,232 in FY 2020 year-to-date, meaning that individuals sitting in local or state custody for violations of those jurisdictions' criminal laws are being released back into the communities, where many will re-offend, as opposed to being turned over to ICE for proceedings commensurate with their corresponding immigration violations.

Going forward, ERO will need additional enforcement resources to address the growing non-detained docket and the fugitive backlog, which surpassed 600,000 during the first part of FY 2020², and will continue to grow due to continuing arrivals at the border, a 45 percent *in absentia* order of removal rate, and high numbers of aliens who violate their terms of release from ICE custody and abscond from the Alternatives to Detention (ATD) program. Without additional resources to actually effectuate a judge's removal orders, we will have an immigration enforcement and court system in which billions of dollars a year are spent to obtain orders, that are not worth the paper they are written on – with the exception of a small percentage, and mainly those who have come to ICE's attention through the criminal justice system. This budget seeks to address these issues by enhancing staffing in both the law enforcement officer and accompanying support staff ranks.

MANAGING THE DETAINED POPULATION

In FY 2019, ERO experienced a significant increase in overall book-ins, as well as book-ins resulting from CBP activity at the border. During this time period, overall book-ins increased by 29 percent compared to FY 2018, while book-ins resulting from CBP activity jumped from 61 percent of overall book-ins in FY 2018 to 73 percent in FY 2019. ERO's Average Daily Population (ADP), which measures the number of individuals in ICE custody on an average day across the fiscal year, reached 50,165 detainees in FY 2019, an increase of 19 percent compared to FY 2018. Like ERO's initial book-ins, the increase in overall ADP was driven by the increased CBP activity at the border, with CBP apprehensions accounting for 60 percent of those in custody, and ERO administrative arrests in the interior accounting for only 40 percent, while in FY 2018, CBP apprehensions accounted for 46 percent and ERO arrests counted for 54 percent. Although the FY 2019 ADP increased significantly during this time period, it does not fully capture the impact of the border crisis and its effects on the detention system. At the peak of the crisis in August 2019, ERO had over 56,000 aliens in detention, and both ERO and CBP were forced to conduct unprecedented direct releases of hundreds of thousands of aliens into the United States. During

² FY 2018 non-detained fugitive alien total was 565,892. The fugitive backlog surpassed 600,000 toward the end of December 2019.

this time ICE directly released approximately 200,000 family unit members from its custody³, while CBP was also forced to conduct direct releases of thousands of members of this population who were never turned over to ICE and are not represented in ICE's release data as a result.

Since ERO's limited detention beds account for only a small fraction of those who are amenable to removal, the agency's detention resources are primarily focused on individuals who represent a threat to public safety, for whom detention is mandatory by law, or who may be a flight risk. In fact, ICE generally detains approximately 1.5 percent of all aliens on its dockets. This budget requests funding supporting a total of 60,000 detention beds, including 55,000 adult beds and 5,000 family beds. As previously noted, these beds are necessary for ICE to respond quickly to border surges, prevent wholesale catch and release, manage detained cases with medical conditions that require cohorting, and to effect the proper and efficient removal of aliens with final orders of removal, which increased from just over a million at the end of FY 2018 to more than 1.16 million as of March 2020. In addition to our current detained population, operationally we are also planning to expand key enforcement programs, such as partnering with State and Local facilities under 287(g) authorities within the INA and partnerships that will necessitate a need for additional detention capacity, along with surging other ICE and DHS resources to jurisdictions with large numbers of at-large criminal aliens and fugitives, among other operational adjustments. These include our 287(g) Jail Enforcement Model, which has 76 partnerships in 21 states as of March 2020, as well as the Warrant Service Officer program, which launched in May 2019 and has since expanded to include 49 partnerships in five states. It also includes our partnership with DHS colleagues, who are assisting us with surging resources to jurisdictions with large numbers of at-large criminal aliens and fugitives, as well as other operational adjustments necessary to address current backlogs.

ALTERNATIVES TO DETENTION

ICE's ATD program uses technology and case management to monitor aliens' court appearances and compliance with release conditions while their removal proceedings are pending on the non-detained immigration court docket. ATD is not a substitute for detention but may complement immigration enforcement efforts by offering increased supervision for a relatively small subset of eligible aliens who are not currently in ICE detention. Additionally, while more resources would improve the efficacy of ATD at the current level of enrollment of approximately 90,000⁴ participants, the program already faces significant resource and enforcement challenges and is not a viable solution for addressing the more than 3.3 million cases on the continually expanding non-detained docket.

To demonstrate some of the financial impact of increased enrollment, ICE looked at the approximate cost of enrolling one very limited group of aliens: family unit heads of household apprehended at the Southwest Border during FY 2019 – and excluding all other populations such as the 367,000 single adults apprehended or deemed inadmissible at the border during the same

³ ICE began manually tracking the number of family unit members released from its custody on December 21, 2018. Between December 2018 and September 30, 2019, ICE released approximately 200,000 family unit members across its four Field Offices covering the Southwest Border. Most of these aliens were apprehended by the USBP, subsequently transferred to ICE custody, and released into the interior of the country shortly thereafter.

⁴ ATD participant data is current as of February 15, 2020.

time period, all those apprehended or deemed inadmissible after the close of FY 2019, current single adult ATD participants, and ERO's administrative arrests in the interior.

According to CBP records, in FY 2019, 473,682 members of family units were apprehended or deemed inadmissible along the Southwest Border, including 228,342 adult heads of household. If only these 228,342 heads of household were enrolled in ATD, at a fully burdened rate of \$7.29 per day per participant, it would cost \$1.6 million to enroll them in ATD for a single day or about \$600 million for an entire year – nearly double the FY 20 budget for the entire ATD program. Given that non-detained cases often take years to conclude, and these costs do not take into account enforcement and detention requirements for the quarter of family unit ATD participants who absconded in FY 2019 or to locate and apprehend those that are ordered removed—as the vast majority are, ICE believes that this is a very conservative estimate, and the actual cost of ATD for enrolling this limited group would likely be significantly higher. It is also important to note that this \$600 million cost estimate does not include any other populations, demonstrating the magnitude of the resources that would be required to expand ATD appropriately.

While ICE has already expanded its use of ATD from approximately 23,000 participants in FY 2014 to a current participant level of approximately 90,000, in FY 2020 YTD, at the request of Congress and in response to the crisis at the Southwest Border, this expansion has come with a number of challenges, including high levels of absconders—particularly among recently enrolled family units. In FY 2019, the absconder rate⁵ for family units was 26.9 percent, more than double the 12.3 percent absconder rate for non-family unit participants, demonstrating the growing challenges such enrollments create for immigration enforcement. It should also be noted that these rates likely significantly underestimate the real non-compliance rates, as due to the expense of prolonged ATD, most of these individuals are removed from the program long before their cases are concluded, and some even before having their first hearing. Additionally, in FY 2014, ICE spent \$91 million on ATD, which resulted in 2,157 removals; ATD funding increased to 274.6 million in FY 2019; however removals of participants has insignificantly increased, as only 3,125 were removed that fiscal year. In essence, this additional investment in ATD of \$183.6 million has only led to an additional 968 removals, at a cost of \$189,669.42 per additional removal.

Thus, while ATD can complement other immigration enforcement efforts when used appropriately on a vetted and monitored population of participants, the program has not proven to be effective in facilitating ERO's ultimate mission of removing aliens with final orders or providing timely resolution for those who spend years with their cases in limbo. While funding for the program has increased, it has not kept pace with the level of enrollment and enrolling additional participants without corresponding enforcement resources will only exacerbate existing problems and add to the growing fugitive backlog. ICE first and foremost needs the resources to keep all ATD participants enrolled through the pendency of their proceedings, and to locate, arrest, detain, and remove those who violate the terms of their enrollment or receive final orders, rather than continually expanding enrollment under current conditions.

MIGRANT PROTECTION PROTOCOLS

⁵ Absconder Rate = Count of Absconders/Count of Overall Terminations. ICE calculates the percentage of absconders by looking at the overall number of aliens who concluded the ATD program in a given time period (“overall terminations”), and the number of those terminations which occurred due to a participant absconding.

Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) have been in place since January 2019. Since its inception and through January 2020, over 59,000 migrants have been enrolled, each receiving a Notice to Appear date and time. Hearings are taking place at temporary hearing facilities at both the Brownsville and Laredo, TX, Ports of Entry, and at EOIR hearing rooms in San Diego and El Paso.

The FY 2021 budget requests \$126 million to address the annual cost of operating the two temporary hearing facilities, and it accounts for ICE-incurred transportation expenses shuttling case participants to EOIR hearing rooms not immediately proximate to the border. This request also accounts for the ongoing administrative and bailiff service activities within the Brownsville and Laredo sites.

LEGAL SUPPORT

The FY 2021 Budget requests \$62.7 million for staffing and facilities funding for the ICE Office of the Principal Legal Advisor (OPLA) to address structural staffing shortfalls and to start to catch-up with the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) staffing and hearing room expansion. The funding supports an additional 421 attorneys and 122 legal support staff to handle litigation matters from a growing number of Immigration Judges that has far outpaced OPLA attorney growth. Since 2017, EOIR's authorized and funded number of IJs has increased 77 percent, while in comparison, OPLA's funded number of personnel has only increased by 12 percent. The FY 2021 budget request sets us on a path towards achieving a staffing resource balance with EOIR to ensure that a properly trained, equipped and prepared OPLA attorney is ready to represent the U.S. government in immigration court. The funding would also enable OPLA to address EOIR's 163 new courtroom expansion plans in 2021, some of which are in locations where OPLA has no presence at this time. Increasing the number of immigration judges without the commensurate increase in OPLA support at those locations may result in the U.S. government not being represented in immigration proceedings.

COMBATTING TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS

The FY 2021 Budget includes an increase of \$259.3 million for Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the principle investigative arm of DHS responsible for investigating transnational crime and threats, and for disrupting and dismantling global criminal enterprises and terrorist networks that threaten or seek to exploit the customs and immigration laws of the United States. Utilizing its unique and expansive criminal and administrative authorities; strategic law enforcement and non-governmental partnerships; robust international footprint and connectivity; and cutting-edge technology and innovation, HSI successfully identified and mitigated systematic vulnerabilities in our nation's border, financial, trade, and transportation systems. HSI's investigative efforts both at home and abroad helped protect U.S. national, border, and economic security and ensure the safety of the public and of our communities.

Appropriations received in FY 2019 resulted numerous record-breaking successes for HSI, with investigative efforts leading to 37,547 criminal arrests in FY 2019, the highest arrest total since the agency's inception, and an increase of 3,200 arrests over FY 2018. Additionally, HSI successfully protected the public from crimes of victimization and exploitation, arresting 2,197 criminals for human trafficking offenses and 3,957 predators for child exploitation violations. HSI employs a victim-centered approach to its investigations, identifying and/or rescuing 428 human

victims of human trafficking and 1,069 victims of child exploitation. Moreover, HSI addressed the threat to our communities posed by violent transnational gangs, leading to the criminal arrests of 3,886 gang members, including 337 arrests of members of the notoriously violent MS-13 gang. In its continued effort to combat TCOs and prevent them from obtaining the criminal proceeds that fund their operations, HSI also seized over 775 million dollars in currency and assets in FY 2019.

In FY 2019, HSI responded to the crisis at the Southern Border by dedicating personnel to assist in combating the trend of fraudulent families crossing the border to enter the United States. These teams consisted of special agents, intelligence analysts, forensic interview specialists, and document fraud examiners who deployed to interview groups suspected of fraudulently claiming familial relationships in order to facilitate human smuggling activity. As a result of these efforts, to date, HSI has identified 761 fraudulent family units, 1,100 fraudulent documents, and presented 1,261 individuals for criminal prosecution, with 1,106 being accepted for prosecution.

One of the tools utilized by these deployed teams was Rapid DNA technology. HSI conducted an initial pilot in May 2019 and then launched a second pilot of DNA testing—Operation Double Helix 2.0, which began on July 15, 2019. ICE received \$5.5 million in the supplemental for this effort, allowing for over 10,000 DNA tests at 7 locations along the Southern Border. The pilot has since expanded to 4 additional locations bringing the total number of testing locations to 11. To date, Operation Double Helix 2.0 has resulted in 3,114 family units being tested with 275 family units (9%) testing negative for familial relationship. Based on those results 372 individuals have been presented for prosecution and 218 have been accepted. As a result of these deployments of personnel to the Southwest Border to conduct interviews, detect fraudulent documents, and conduct Rapid DNA testing, HSI has seen a dramatic decrease in the number of fraudulent family incidents over the past few months, indicating our efforts have impacted the use of family fraud to circumvent our nation's immigration laws at the border.

In FY 2019, HSI also began receiving intelligence about children who had recently entered the United States along the southern border as part of family units who then departed the United States a short time later on flights accompanied by unrelated adults who were in possession of notarized letters purporting to grant permission to fly with the child back to Honduras or Guatemala. To combat this trend HSI initiated Operation Noble Guardian in May of 2019, and to date, have encountered over 790 children who entered the United States as part of a family unit and then departed the United States to return to Central America a short time later. This operation has resulted in 444 administrative arrests, 6 criminal arrests, the rescue of 8 children, and has led to several significant ongoing HSI investigations involving hundreds of recycled children.

The FY 2021 Budget request would enable HSI to continue to accomplish its critically important mission, and to protect the American people and its borders from the criminal elements that endanger it. Specifically, this funding would enable HSI to hire an additional 223 full time personnel to support anticipated increases in investigative workload along the Southwest Border resulting from CBP staffing increases and additional non-intrusive inspection technology (NIIT) deployments at ports of entry. Additionally, funding in the amount of \$7.3 million dollars would be expended for the continuation of ICE's Tactical Communications (TACCOM) regional initiative.

This budget also includes an increase of \$6.5M to fund the salaries of 89 cross-designated Task Force Officers (TFOs) to allow them to better support HSI in countering criminal organizations that threaten our borders. These TFOs mainly serve on HSI-led Border Enforcement Security Taskforces (BESTs) located throughout the U.S. and are a key component in the fight against TCOs involved in the smuggling of drugs, human smuggling and trafficking, and currency through their long-established networks and smuggling routes. HSI created 7 new BEST units around the country in FY 2019 and strategically placed them in new locations to disrupt opioids coming into the United States through multiple avenues, including International Mail Facilities and Express Consignment Carriers. HSI special agents continued to be at the forefront of the U.S. government's efforts to fight the opioid epidemic, seizing 12,466 pounds of opioids in FY 2019, a 2,538-pound increase over FY 2018. In the fight against fentanyl, HSI made over 2,100 fentanyl-related arrests – an increase of 45 percent from FY 2018 – and seized 3,688 pounds of fentanyl – nearly 950 pounds more than in FY 2018. Additionally, HSI seized 463,889 pounds of cocaine and 145,117 pounds of methamphetamine during FY 2019. TFOs assigned to BESTs play a crucial role in supporting this effort and enabling HSI to efficiently and effectively address this increased workload.

POSITIONING OUR WORKFORCE TO MEET THE MISSION

ICE's most valuable resource is its people: the incredibly dedicated, professional men and women who are on the front lines enforcing our immigration laws, representing the government in court, building cases to topple transnational criminal organizations, and providing the logistical and administrative support to ensure effective and efficient operations. To that end, the FY 2021 President's Budget supports robust growth in ICE personnel to continue hiring gains made over the past several fiscal years and to ensure that ICE has the right mix of people in the right locations working on the right matters to keep our borders secure, and our country and its citizens safe.

Specifically, the FY 2021 budget request includes 2,844 law enforcement officers, including 2,095 Deportation Officers and 749 Criminal Investigators. Deportation Officers will work critical issues such as management of ICE's detained docket and the non-detained population (of which there are over 3.3 million aliens), as well as intelligence gathering and counterterrorism activities. ICE's Criminal Investigators will conduct investigations into the illicit cross border movement of people, goods, and money into, out of, and throughout the United States. Through investigations, operations, and initiatives targeting significant transnational criminal activity – such as human trafficking; child exploitation; the smuggling and distribution of opioids, fentanyl, and other dangerous narcotics; violent gang activity; financial crime; weapons and sensitive technology proliferation and smuggling; and cybercrime – these Criminal Investigators will ensure public safety and national security, and will protect the American people and its borders from the criminal elements that endanger it.

As mentioned, this budget request also supports 421 attorneys who will represent the United States Government in immigration proceedings. This cadre of attorneys will help ICE begin to catch up to the recent expansive growth of Immigration Judge teams, and hopefully mitigate the prospect of “dim courtrooms,” locations where no ICE attorneys are present, absent the infusion of these critical staffing resources.

Lastly, 1,371 operational support personnel are included in the request. This includes intelligence analysts to support Criminal Investigators, legal support staff to support ICE attorneys,

and the oftentimes overlooked mission support personnel supporting contracting, data governance, and infrastructure and other support functions, which are absolutely critical to the overall operation of the agency.

INVESTING IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

This budget request seeks enhancement funding in mission-centric information technology systems and addresses long-standing deficiencies in critical infrastructure and in our asset classes; vehicles, facilities repair and maintenance, and IT refresh.

Funding is requested to enable HSI to improve data analytics and streamline information delivery that will piece the disconnected dots of illicit behavior, such as in the areas of money laundering and worksite enforcement operations planning and execution. Additional funds are requested to continue modernizing our end-to-end case management system through the Title 8 (T-8) initiative, which will improve functionality for our officers and improve reporting capabilities through increased automation, thereby enabling ICE to provide greater visibility and granularity to Congress on its operations. I thank this Committee for its past support for this initiative, including with the FY 2020 enacted appropriation, helping us make key investments in these IT capabilities.

We also need to capitalize our critical asset programs our front-line operators rely upon not only for their responsibilities, but for their safety. This means properly functioning vehicles, secure communications, and adequate mission-enabling IT and facilities infrastructure to effectively and safely fulfill our law enforcement mission. I thank this Committee for its fleet funding included in the FY 2020 enacted appropriation, and we have a good plan to share with you on how we will execute this funding this year, and beyond, which includes introduction of a cost-effective leasing program. We need to continue making sound investments in our ICE-owned facilities to ensure the safety and well-being of our federal employees as well as the care of those in our custody. We ask that you provide specific funding for our facilities projects, so that our operational programs do not need to underwrite our exceedingly long list of repair and maintenance projects at ICE-leased facilities where our front line personnel do the work so critical to the national security and public safety of this country. Continued use of program funding for required infrastructure, improvements and repairs creates unpredictable and damaging effects on programs.

CONCLUSION

ICE continues to work to balance effective law enforcement with the large number of aliens, including family units, arriving at our borders and already in-Country. The increase in the flow of migrants and the change in those who are arriving at our border are putting migrants, particularly young children, at risk of harm from smugglers, traffickers, criminals, and the dangers of the difficult journey.

Funding people, technology, and equipment are especially prudent investments given today's challenges. We believe no other investment will return more operational value on every dollar than the extraordinary men and women of ICE. Removing illicit narcotics, dismantling

gangs, and detaining and removing illegal aliens, especially those criminals and public safety threats, along with ICE's ability to counter emerging threats, also constitutes an operational success that continues to yield important results for the safety of the nation.

Thank you again for inviting me to testify today. I look forward to your questions.