



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

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## Hearing Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

### *CBP Workforce Challenges: Exploring Solutions to Address Recruitment and Retention*

March 7, 2019

Today, the Committee is examining how to address Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) hiring challenges.

More than two years ago, President Trump issued an executive order seeking to hire an additional 5,000 Border Patrol Agents. In the rush to meet this hiring demand, CBP entered into a five-year \$297 million contract with Accenture with a goal of hiring 7,500 Border Patrol Agents and CBP Officers.

More than a year later, CBP has spent nearly \$20 million and only hired 35 agents and officers.

While I am encouraged CBP came to its senses and issued a partial stop work order on the contract, I continue to have doubts about CBP's decision-making as it tries to address its hiring struggles. I am concerned that this Administration has acted in a rush to fulfill campaign promises rather than taking a thoughtful approach to hiring.

Before contracting out its hiring at a potential cost of \$300 million, CBP needed to address systemic problems at the agency leading to attrition among its existing workforce and difficulty recruiting and hiring new personnel.

As CBP assesses which aspects of the Accenture contract are and are not effective, it must refocus its hiring efforts on where its true needs lie. For example, CBP Officers are a critical, yet often forgotten, resource in combatting drug trafficking. Indeed, they work on the frontline at our ports of entry where most of the illegal drugs are smuggled into our country.

It is encouraging that the DHS Appropriations Bill for 2019 authorizes over \$58 million for 600 new CBP Officers. I hope to hear from our witnesses today whether this request meets the needs at our ports of entry.

While CBP struggles to meet its longstanding staffing goals, it also must take steps to ensure that it retains its current personnel. Unfortunately, CBP faces high attrition rates across the component. This is

not surprising given that the most recent Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey ranked CBP 372nd out of 415 agency subcomponents.

To address these attrition and morale challenges, CBP should consider implementing workforce incentives to promote retention of its current personnel.

I look forward to hearing from the witnesses today on what actions CBP is taking to evaluate the need for new personnel and develop a clear plan to better retain them once on duty. With that, I thank the witnesses for being here today and look forward to a productive hearing.

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