



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hearing Statement of Oversight, Management, and Accountability Subcommittee Chairwoman Xochitl Torres Small (D-NM)

CBP Workforce Challenges: Exploring Solutions to Address Recruitment and Retention

March 7, 2019

As a Member who represents a district on the southern border, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the critical issue of recruitment, hiring, and retention at U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

CBP employs nearly 45,000 law enforcement personnel across its three operational components—the Office of Field Operations (OFO), U.S. Border Patrol (Border Patrol), and Air and Marine Operations (AMO).

These personnel have the tremendously important mission of safeguarding our nation's borders while facilitating lawful trade and travel. More specifically, they are responsible for preventing terrorists and terrorist weapons from entering the United States and preventing the illegal trafficking of people, narcotics, and contraband into the United States. At the same time, CBP personnel are charged with facilitating cross-border commerce that is the lifeblood of communities like mine and essential to our national economy as well.

However, critical law enforcement positions at CBP are vacant. In recent years, CBP has been unable to achieve minimum staffing levels for its Border Patrol Agent positions or its staffing goals for other law enforcement officer positions.

The agency has acknowledged difficulties with its lengthy 12-step hiring process, which includes a medical exam and polygraph. The time-to-hire is on average 300 days, and less than 3% of applicants successfully complete the hiring process.

Additionally, as a native of southern New Mexico, I know full well the challenges that CBP faces in attracting and retaining qualified personnel, particularly in remote areas where an employee's spouse may have trouble finding a job and children must travel far to attend school.

Further, being a CBP Officer or Border Patrol Agent is a demanding job that requires an extraordinary amount of dedication. Agents and officers often work long hours in difficult conditions.

I look forward to hearing about possible solutions to workforce challenges, including non-financial and financial incentives. I welcome any ideas the witnesses — or my colleagues — have for attracting and retaining qualified applicants.

I hope we can also discuss the lessons learned from CBP's hiring contract with Accenture Federal Services. I understand there is a partial stop work order and that changes are being made to the contract to focus on advertising, marketing and developing innovative practices.

I want to learn more about the innovative ideas being considered for reducing CBP's time-to-hire and using data analytics to make recruitment more effective and efficient.

I believe the recruiting, hiring and retention problems can be solved if we work together to address them, and I look forward to continuing that effort today. Again, thank you to all of the witnesses for being here, and I look forward to your testimony.

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Media contact: Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978