



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)**

***Border Security, Commerce and Travel:  
Commissioner McAleenan's Vision for the Future of CBP***

**Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security**

**April 25, 2018**

Our border security challenges are more nuanced than simply building a wall.

At a time when the Department's own data show that illegal entries are at the lowest levels they have been since the 1970s, it makes little sense why we should heavily rely on building walls for the foreseeable future or deploy National Guard troops to the southern border.

During last month's subcommittee, the Government Accountability Office testified that U.S. Customs and Border Protection still does not have metrics to measure how a wall or even land-based technology contribute to border security in general.

I urge you to correct this immediately.

Given that CBP has received more than \$1 billion for barriers and requested another \$1 billion for the upcoming fiscal year, I am concerned that we are bound to repeat many mistakes if we do not know what we are getting in return.

I also echo Ranking Member Vela's frustration that the Trump Administration continues to overlook critical staffing problems within CBP, in particular the shortage of officers manning our ports of entry.

Both Border Patrol and the Office of Field Operations are losing trained, experienced agents and officers at a faster rate than CBP is able to replace them.

This is another problem I urge you to address quickly.

Lastly, I am concerned by the policy proposals and practice CBP and other components within DHS are using to deter illegal migration.

In February, all 12 of Democrats on this Committee and 63 other Democratic colleagues sent a letter to Secretary Nielsen asking her to halt the practice of

separating migrant parents from their children when they are apprehended at the border or in immigration detention in cases that do not warrant it.

The practice is inhumane, excessively punitive, and can deliberately interfere with their legal right to request asylum.

I reiterate my opposition to this practice, and I caution CBP from pursuing other such policies that do not honor our values as a nation of immigrants.

In your testimony, you commit to enhancing “internal integrity programs,” transparency, and “professionalism measures.”

I take this to mean that misconduct and lack of professionalism by errant agents and officers will be swiftly addressed.

A number of videos have circulated in recent months that show CBP personnel acting in ways that do not seem to comply with policy.

We know that the overwhelming majority of CBP personnel work hard, conduct themselves professionally, and are a credit to their agency.

I hope you are investigating these incidents to ensure they are not indicative of a problem within CBP's ranks.

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