



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

A Review of the FY 2020 Budget Request for U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

May 9, 2019

Today, we will hear from the three DHS components that are responsible for carrying out the Department's border security and immigration-related missions. The President's FY 2020 budget proposal continues to illustrate that the Trump Administration's priorities are skewed, short-sighted, and cruel. One only needs to review the White House's supplemental request sent to Congress last week to know that the Administration continues to act in bad faith in regards to addressing the current challenge we face of our southern border.

There is a humanitarian crisis on our southern border, and this situation has been unfolding for nearly a year. This crisis is one of this Administration's own making, and few steps have been taken to truly alleviate the pressures on the migrants, officers, and agents on the ground.

The White House's supplemental request is a non-starter. The request for \$81.7 million for more detention space for migrant families illustrates that the Administration refuses to acknowledge or does not care that detention is harmful to children. The request for \$23 million for a pilot program that will dramatically change the credible fear screening process is both deeply problematic and possibly illegal – which is not surprising for the Trump Administration. Neither of these two requests should be approved by Congress.

Similarly, the President's FY 2020 DHS budget proposal doubles down on many of the same requests that have been denied for funding by Congress over the past two years. For example, the FY 2020 U.S. Customs and Border Protection budget is dominated yet again by a request for billions of dollars for a wasteful border wall at the expense of other critical border security investments – such as non-intrusive inspection technology at ports of entry. This technology has proven, time and again, to be an important tool in detecting nearly 90% of the illegal drugs seized by CBP.

Despite the long-standing and serious problems with conditions and abuses at immigration detention facilities, the White House continues to advocate for more bed space. Funding for ICE's Homeland Security Investigations, which investigates transnational drug trafficking organizations and human smuggling rings, would be diverted to fund interior immigration enforcement arrests and deportations instead. Meanwhile, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' budget proposal shows this Administration is unilaterally morphing the agency into an enforcement one, contrary to the law, rather than addressing the growing backlog of immigration applications.

Border security is more than building a wall. Shortchanging legal due process and treating migrants inhumanely are not in keeping with our country's values. Democrats remain committed to being good stewards of taxpayer dollars by targeting resources at proven border security efforts while treating those arriving at our southern border in a humane manner.

I would urge the Administration to stop putting forward non-starter budget requests and instead join us in that effort.

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