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Thank you Madam Chair for the opportunity to address the subcommittee today and welcome to Santa Teresa, New Mexico. I'm Marco Grajeda, the Executive Director of the New Mexico Border Authority, an executive branch state agency that facilitates the development of infrastructure around our state's three land ports of entry.

As a fronterizo, with direct ties to the United States and Mexico, I know first-hand the importance of our ports of entry. Like many people, who call this region home, I have family and friends on both sides of the border, and I've spent many hours at our ports of entry waiting to get from one side to the other. My background is unique to this area, where every day, people cross the border for work, school, to shop and visit loved ones. This is life on the border, and a key reason why our ports of entry are incredibly important to this binational region.

In terms of trade, our land ports of entry are proving to be one of America's greatest investments. This region, for example, now leads the state in exports, because of the work done here, and thanks to the critical role of the Santa Teresa Port of Entry. Last year, exports totaled more than 1.4 billion dollars, nearly twice as much as the larger Albuquerque metro area, which until recently held a comfortable lead in the state. Also, our neighbor city, El Paso, Texas has seen tremendous growth in the last decade—and is now on the list of top ten export markets. It's important to note, that the benefit of our land ports of entry extends far beyond the border region. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, 32 states across the country, have Mexico as their first, second or third largest export market. That includes states far from the border like Ohio, Iowa and Pennsylvania

While this growth tied to our ports is significant—more can be achieved with strategic federal investments.

So what is needed? A major selling point for the Santa Teresa Port of Entry has been shorter wait times compared to other ports in the region. This continues to be the case on the commercial side, but because we don't have as many customs officers as we need, wait times have increased on the privately-owned vehicle side. This needs to be addressed. And this is not something the local leadership, because the region has not received any new customs officers in the past seven years, even though the port has seen the fastest growth rate in crossings, new programs and duties were added, and despite losing five to six customs officers each year during that time. At the nearby Columbus Port of Entry, we recently celebrated the completion of an 85-million-dollar port of entry, but they also don't have enough officers to fully take advantage of the updated facility. Having more men and women in blue working in our ports will expedite screenings, reduce wait times and encourage greater investment.

When it comes to infrastructure improvements, the port with the greatest need for federal investment in New Mexico is Santa Teresa, which is long overdue for a major expansion and modernization. As I mentioned earlier, this region is leading the state in exports, despite

inefficiencies at the port, but an updated crossing would further promote increased economic activity in the state and provide a much-needed reliever route for Ciudad Juarez and the City of El Paso. As we work toward that goal, enhancements that facilitate the flow of oversized and overweight cargo northbound and southbound should be prioritized. This is especially true for oversized vehicles heading south, that now cross the port through north bound passenger lanes—essentially blocking trade and travel for several hours. Another priority project is working with Mexico to expand lanes heading northbound to alleviate bottleneck issues.

I also want share that the Border Authority is working to protect the area surrounding the Columbus Port of Entry from recurring flooding, which impacts port operations each year. We would welcome any assistance from this committee as we seek federal funding.

Lastly, I want to mention that at the New Mexico Border Authority we are working to take advantage of the federal Donations Acceptance Program, to pay for a containment site at the Santa Teresa POE. This would open the port of entry to new cargo, including medical equipment, airbags and fuel. This project is a priority for the region and could significantly boost daily commercial crossings and make the region more attractive to businesses.

I want to close by saying thank you again for being here and for holding this important field hearing. Like you, we are committed to working on behalf of our great binational communities and the many states that benefit from trade with Mexico. We are your partners on the ground and we welcome your continued support.

Thank you,