



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Joint Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)**

### ***Smart Investments: Technology's Role in a Multi-Layered Border Security Strategy***

**July 9, 2024**

I welcome today's hearing on border security technology as I have long supported small businesses interested in partnering with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to fulfill the Department's essential mission of securing our Nation.

I appreciate that the Biden-Harris Administration and DHS have been dedicated to increasing opportunities for small business owners as the Nation strives to fulfill America's foundational promise. President Biden is successfully carrying out his pledge to help minority-owned businesses grow by increasing the amount of Federal funds spent on contracts with small, disadvantaged businesses.

In Fiscal Year 2023, the Biden-Harris Administration awarded an all-time high of \$178.6 billion in Federal contracts to small businesses, including disadvantaged businesses. DHS obligated \$9.9 billion to small businesses – the most in Department history. In contrast, Republicans are proposing significant cuts to the Small Business Administration and attempting to defund the President's agenda to advance racial and gender equity in Federal contracts. Republicans fail to recognize that when small businesses—the backbone of America's economy—engage in government procurement, they have the potential to foster job creation, diversity, competitiveness, and innovation.

Unfortunately, the Federal procurement process may be complicated and challenging to manage, particularly for businesses that have never done business with the government before. I look forward to hearing today how we can strengthen the ability of businesses, especially small businesses, to secure contracts with DHS to increase the use of novel technologies, including border technologies.

Technology can have a profound impact on how we secure the homeland and protect the American people. It can be a tremendous force multiplier for the officers at ports of entry and agents in the field who work tirelessly to prevent dangerous people and contraband from entering our country. Technology makes it possible to inspect more vehicles and cargo, identify who is entering the country, and detect illegal border activity. However, we must use technology in a responsible manner that protects privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties.

I also look forward to discussing today how we can ensure compliance with privacy policies and individual rights protections, such as due process and non-discrimination, as we field new and advanced border technologies.

# # #

Media contact: Adam Comis at 202-225-9978