



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Joint Hearing Statement of Emergency Management & Technology Subcommittee Ranking Member Troy Carter (D-LA)

The Broken Path: How Transnational Criminal Organizations Profit from Human Trafficking at the Southwest Border

November 14, 2023

Let me say from the outset, that the issues of human trafficking and smuggling are important, so I am disappointed that in announcing this hearing, my Republican colleagues decided to make this hearing part of a multiple phase plan to impeach or smear the President and the Secretary of Homeland Security.

Human trafficking and smuggling are not new problems that the country is facing, sadly, we have had these problems for decades and the only real way to make headway is to work together. I hope that coming away from this hearing, we do more to approach these and other issues in a more bipartisan fashion and give a more balanced approach. And while much of the focus of today's hearing for my Republican colleagues is on the border, we should also note that human trafficking can and frequently does occur without crossing any borders.

Human trafficking is an ongoing challenge in my home state of Louisiana. In 2021, Governor John Bel Edwards signed into law a bill that established the Office of Human Trafficking Prevention. In February, the Office of Human Trafficking Prevention released a report for 2022 that had alarming statistics—70% of the reported trafficking victims in Louisiana were under 18 years old, 88% were female, 53% were African American, 39% were White, and the majority were U.S. citizens.

At the Federal level, multiple Administrations have launched initiatives to address these issues. Congress has been active on these issues as well. Last year, Congress passed the Countering Human Trafficking Act of 2021, which authorized and expanded the Center for Countering Human Trafficking. With this bill signed into law by President Biden, Congress institutionalized the DHS counter-trafficking mission ensuring that DHS can investigate human trafficking and disrupt cross-border illicit networks. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about how the Countering Human Trafficking Act has been implemented.

I would like to acknowledge the Biden Administration's efforts to end human trafficking and smuggling through the 2022 launch of the Counter Human Smuggler Campaign, which conducted over 6,700 disruptions to the human smuggling infrastructure. These efforts included raids on smugglers' stash houses and impounding trailers used to unlawfully transport migrants. In May 2023, the Administration launched a digital ad campaign to combat smuggler-driven disinformation on social media platforms. These ads included simple images and language about U.S. immigration laws and were geotargeted for migrants along the migratory path in Central and South America.

Human trafficking and smuggling are complex issues, which is why Congress needs to address the root causes and eliminate a fractured immigration system that has negatively impacted millions of migrants and subjected them to unimaginable abuse. We need to work on a bipartisan front to keep the

government open, enable our law enforcement to keep going after traffickers and smugglers, and assist the victims of these terrible crimes.

I look forward to speaking to our witnesses today about human trafficking and smuggling and, more importantly, what Congress can do to help victims and dismantle systems that make people more susceptible to being victims of trafficking and smuggling.

#

Media contact: Adam Comis at 202-225-9978