



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)**  
***Examining the Court-Ordered Reimplementation of the Remain in Mexico Policy***  
**March 2, 2022**

I thank Chairwoman Barragán for holding this important hearing to examine the reimplementation of the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP), also known as “Remain in Mexico.” Donald Trump started this misguided policy to advance his anti-immigrant agenda.

Like family separation, MPP is another cruel, Trump-era policy that has left a stain on our Nation’s tradition of protecting refugees and asylum seekers. MPP forces vulnerable migrants to wait in dangerous conditions in Mexican border towns until their asylum hearing. Many migrants have been victims of kidnappings, extortion, and assaults while being forced to remain in Mexico under MPP.

Our border policies must be humane and reflect our values. We must treat people with respect and dignity, while following international law and honoring our obligations towards asylum seekers. MPP does not live up to those values. We have heard President Biden say just that. Hours after being inaugurated, he suspended new enrollments into the program.

The Administration began to wind down MPP and processed migrants with pending cases into the United States. Like many, I applauded when DHS officially terminated the Remain in Mexico policy. Unfortunately, a Federal Court in Texas ordered the Department to re-start the program. The Administration has appealed the Court decision and issued a new MPP termination memo, which will go into effect once the current injunction is lifted.

The Department has been forced to restart the MPP program, but the Administration has worked with the Government of Mexico and international organizations to make changes to the program, mostly for the better. For example, the Department committed to certifying that migrants have access to legal representation. While this is a welcome step, I continue to have significant concerns about implementation. If lawyers are not available to take migrants’ calls or do not have sufficient time to consult with migrants, the access not meaningful. We look forward to hearing how the Department intends improve legal access going forward.

DHS also directed employees to screen migrants for vulnerabilities and expanded the categories of asylum seekers considered too vulnerable to be returned to Mexico. This is, too, is a welcome improvement. However, not all of the changes have been for the better.

Notably, the Department has chosen to expand eligibility for enrollment into MPP to nationals of any country in the Western Hemisphere, other than Mexico. This includes Haitian migrants and other non-Spanish speaking individuals, who are particularly vulnerable in Mexico. This change to the program was

not required by court order, and it is disturbing to see the Department choose to expand a program it opposes.

Furthermore, the Committee's oversight has raised questions about implementation of many of the Department's promises, as well as coordination between the agencies and organizations carrying out the Remain in Mexico Policy. Particularly in light of these challenges, it is imperative that we conduct rigorous oversight of the Federal agencies and partners responsible for re-implementing the policy. That is what we are here to do today.

I am grateful that the Supreme Court has agreed to expeditiously review the lower court's ruling requiring the Department to reimplement MPP. I am hopeful for a positive outcome that will allow the termination of this terrible policy. Until then, the Federal Government must work to ensure the safety of migrants enrolled in MPP and improve implementation of the program and protections for migrants. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on how the Administration is taking action to accomplish this.

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