

**Chairman Shelley Moore Capito Opening Statement
Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security**

**Hearing to Review the role of the Department of Homeland Security in Stopping the Flow
of Opioids, Methamphetamines, and Other Dangerous Drugs**

May 16, 2018

(As prepared for delivery)

Welcome everyone. I call this hearing of the Subcommittee on Homeland Security to order. This is the Subcommittee's second hearing of this budget cycle, and we are here today to review the role of the Department of Homeland Security in stopping the flow of opioids, methamphetamines, and other dangerous drugs.

We thank Customs and Border Protection's Todd Owen, Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Derek Benner, and the Science and Technology Directorate's André Hentz for agreeing to appear before our Subcommittee today. This is an outstanding panel to help our Subcommittee to get a more detailed understanding of this topic. Each witness is appearing before our Subcommittee for the first time and we look forward to hearing from all of them.

I am also very pleased to be joined again by our Ranking Member Senator Tester. We are off to a good start and look forward to continuing our work together throughout the Fiscal Year 2019 process.

The Department of Homeland Security is one of many federal agencies that is working to combat the ongoing opioid crisis. The Appropriations Committee and many other Congressional Committees are working to ensure that the entire federal government is coordinating across its many agencies to tackle this problem, and it is important for this Subcommittee to understand the unique roles of the Department of Homeland Security.

One of the toughest challenges the Department of Homeland Security is charged with is the careful balancing act of stopping the flow of illicit goods and people across our borders while facilitating the free flow of commerce, which is so important to our economy.

With its broad authority to enforce U.S. customs and trade laws, the Department is uniquely positioned to identify and intercept the movement of contraband not only through our nation's designated land, air, and sea ports but also across our border between legal ports of entry. Despite the commendable efforts of thousands of the Department's frontline officers and agents and

significant investments in intelligence and technology, we know that most illegal drugs in the United States enter our country in this manner.

Once inside the United States, these drugs are quickly distributed via highly complex and often dynamic underground networks that run through the heart of our country. Unfortunately, their final destination is our communities, many of them rural, in places like my home state of West Virginia.

It saddens and angers me that in 2016, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, West Virginia experienced the highest rate of opioid-related overdose deaths in the United States—a rate of 43.4 deaths per 100,000 people. For comparison, this rate is 24 times the rate of 1.8 deaths per 100,000 people in 1999.

The West Virginia's Health Statistics Center's last count for 2017 indicates that 909 West Virginians died of drug overdoses last year. Of these lives lost, 529 were fentanyl-related deaths and 246 were heroin-related – so more than 85 percent of West Virginia drug deaths last year can be attributed to just two types of opioids.

This Subcommittee is committed to doing more to support the Department in helping stop the flow of dangerous drugs into our communities and to working with other Subcommittees to ensure the Department's efforts are complimentary and coordinated with other federal, state, and local agencies.

The recently enacted appropriations bill provided significant new investments to counter opioids, including the highest-ever funding level for this purpose for each component represented here today. For the first time ever, this bill provided specific funding for opioid detection equipment and for research to improve those detection capabilities.

We want to build upon those important first steps, and we hope that hearing from our witnesses today will raise awareness about the role of the Department of Homeland Security in this fight and will help lay the foundation for our Subcommittee's work in this area.

Again, to our witnesses, we appreciate your testimony and your willingness to answer questions from members of this Subcommittee.

I will now turn to our distinguished Ranking Member, Senator Tester [,then to our full committee Chairman, Senator Shelby][, and then to our full Committee Vice Chairman, Senator Leahy] for

any opening remarks [he/they] may have before asking our witnesses to proceed with their testimony.

Then we will allow each Senator, in order of arrival, seven minutes for any statements or questions they may have.

Thank you. Senator Tester.

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