



Representative Scott Wiggam
1st House District

Chairman Lang, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for a resolution to urge the federal government to designate certain transnational criminal organizations, commonly known as cartels, and based in Mexico, as foreign terrorist organizations.

This is in an effort to address the ongoing opioid epidemic confronting Ohio. As you know, despite previous efforts by this legislature, and by many others who are dedicated to fighting this epidemic, more still needs to be done to thwart this threat to our society. Many of us, in some way, shape, or form, have come in contact with individuals, or their family and friends, who have become addicted to opiates. These individuals come from every walk of life, including children and young adults. These individuals live in neighborhoods of varying demographic characteristics - low income, middle income, high income, and both urban and rural. This epidemic does not discriminate based on age, skin color, education attainment, income level, or neighborhood.

It is well established that our country's southern border presents a significant challenge in our fight against the opioid epidemic in that drug cartels are responsible for the flow of opioids across the border into the United States, and into Ohio.

As we continue to see our fellow citizens suffer from addiction, it is imperative that we do what we can to address the problem at its source. We can no longer sit idly by while an influx of opioids crosses our borders and kills our citizens.

These criminal organizations are also responsible for the proliferation of human trafficking in our country and state, an issue which goes hand in hand with the opioid epidemic. Human and drug trafficking are key threats to Ohio's economy, well-being, and overall vitality. Data shows that the vast majority of women who are trafficked have also been forced into opiate addiction so that they are compliant with their traffickers. A recent report from the Cincinnati Enquirer noted that more than 1,030 juveniles were victims of human trafficking between 2014 and 2016, and that another 4,309 youths were at risk of being trafficking victims. The Mexican-based drug cartels control the majority of the flow of opioids and other illicit drugs into this country and into our state. The cartels control large swaths of territory in Mexico to cultivate and produce these drugs and then transport them across the border.

This resolution expresses the desire of the State of Ohio to have the Federal Government designate transnational organizations based in Mexico as Foreign Terrorist Organizations pursuant to 8 USC 1189, to allow the government of the United States to use appropriate means to eliminate and/or mitigate the operations of these organizations which have such a profound negative impact upon the wellbeing of our state. By designating Mexican drug cartels as foreign terrorist organizations, the Federal government would have at its disposal, if it so chooses, enhanced intelligence capabilities, the ability to freeze financial assets of the cartels, the ability

to pursue those who provide material support to the cartels, and if necessary, enhanced military options.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on this matter of grave urgency. I am happy to answer any questions you might have at this time.