

TESTIMONY OF SARA CARTER
IN FRONT OF THE
THE OHIO HOUSE CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE
ON MAY 30, 2019.
“DESIGNATE MEXICAN DRUG CARTELS AS
FOREIGN TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS”

Mr. Chairman and members of the Ohio House Criminal Justice committee, thank you for allowing me to be here with you today.

My name is Sara Carter and for the last 25 years, I have been a war correspondent, documentary film producer and investigative journalist based in Washington. Early in my career I did a series of stories on cartel activities along the Southern Border.

Mr. Chairman, today I am *not* here as a reporter or filmmaker, but rather I am here as a mother who is very concerned about the heroin and opioid epidemic that has gripped our nation and the state of Ohio. I am here to show my support for House Concurrent Resolution 10 – A resolution calling on the federal government to designate certain drug cartels operating from Mexico as foreign terrorist organizations.

Mr. Chairman the willingness of this committee and the State of Ohio to make this stand is something no other state is doing. Because of your leadership, and the leadership of every member here today, I believe this resolution will encourage other states to follow – they have to, we are losing the core of our communities to this epidemic... we are losing a generation of young people.

Two years ago, I decided I wanted to produce a documentary that would help the American people better understand this national health crisis. That film, *Not in Vein* was released in September 2018.

That production brought me to Ohio. We did a lot of filming in Dayton and Columbus. I met some of the best people you would ever want to know.

One of those special people is here with us, my friend Heidi Riggs. Jill Kingston from Brigid’s Path in Dayton – the work she is doing in helping babies going

through withdraw is remarkable. There is Ashley Evans, one of the women who went through Brigid's Path and has since shared her story in the halls of congress and at the White House. Pastor Tom Thompson at The Refuge – a place for recovery that is delivering amazing results.

But, even with all of the work of these amazing people are doing, this state has been known as ground zero for the heroin and opioid epidemic and the DEA has identified Dayton and Columbus as major cartel distribution points. The Mexican Drug Cartels are operating on Ohio soil.

Human trafficking is referred to as one of the fastest growing criminal enterprises in the world – the amount of money cartels make on human trafficking is second only to the global drug trade.

Since human trafficking is so lucrative, the major cartels have expanded their business models from primarily drug trafficking to now include people.

Just like the heroin and opioid epidemic, human trafficking has become a worldwide epidemic that global health organizations estimate enslaves between 21 to 30 million people.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Criminal Justice Committee I commend you for taking this step – a step that no other state has been willing to take. We can pour more money into recovery – and that is very important, but unless we focus on the source and distribution this epidemic will be with us forever.

Thank you.