

Testimony regarding Senate Resolution No. 243

Sponsors: Senators Cirino and Gavarone

Chair Hoagland, Vice Chair Johnson and Ranking Member Thomas and members of the Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity for Senator Gavarone and I to speak with you today regarding a very important Senate Resolution. While we all realize, of course, that a Resolution has no force of law, it can be an important vehicle for our body to express our beliefs on an issue important to all Ohions. If adopted, this Resolution will be forwarded to the President, the Ohio Congressional caucus and key members of the administration.

Last week we approved a Resolution regarding the Ukrainian situation and we prayed for the heroic people of that country. President Biden has also expressed concern for what is happening and has spoken out against Russia for not respecting the Ukrainian border. Unfortunately, he has not shown the same respect for the southern border of the United States. As we all know, policies have consequences and the current border policies of 'catch and release', massive relocations without any vetting, treating everyone like refugees and others have resulted in millions of unidentified people entering the United States from many countries. These policies neglect the safety and security of the citizens of our country and impact more than just border states.

Let's set aside the political side of this argument and think about the impact on Ohio. As elected officials our most important charge is to secure the safety of our citizens, their homes and their businesses. Ohio has contributed to the efforts at the southern border with 100 National Guard troops, officers from the Highway Patrol and, of course, all of our local government law enforcement and first responder personnel who deal with the problems created. We are doing what we can to help. But, with a feckless immigration policy and our federal officials aiding and abetting lawbreakers, along with many NGO's, lessening the impact on Ohioans is proving difficult.

The 2021 seizures at the border of marijuana, cocaine, fentanyl, heroin and methamphetamines broke all records. Of course, these are the illicit drugs that were caught. As reported by the State, we have experienced significant increases in unintentional overdoses as the result of consumption of drugs that are either tainted or more concentrated than usual. Many Ohio families have suffered as the result of these illicit drugs. There is also a racial impact that is out of proportion to the general population. In 2020, Black non-Hispanic males had the highest drug overdose rate in Ohio compared to other gender and race/ethnicity groups.

According to Lori Criss, Director of Ohio's Mental Health Agency, 23 counties represent 80% of the total overdose deaths in Ohio. Places like Lucas, Lorain, Cuyahoga, Lake, Summit, Stark, Mahoning, Franklin, Montgomery, Butler, Hamilton and Richland to name a few. While many of us might disagree with approaches to immigration policy...it is clear that the current policy is hurting the people we serve and something has to be done about it. While our State agencies and local governments are doing what they can to deal with the underlying reasons behind addiction, the supply of these illicit drugs needs to be stopped at the source.

The current border policies have further served to encourage human smuggling which serves to allow criminals to enter the United States to conduct their criminal activities with impunity. Human trafficking is another problem related to our border policies. In 2020, Ohio ranked among the ten worst states in this area. Profiteers from other countries are earning huge amounts of money to bring people through the border, among them many criminals.

Mr. Chairman, in my business career I traveled around the globe and conducted business in many countries, including Russia, Poland, western Europe, China, Korea, Brazil, Argentina, Japan and many more. All of these countries take their border security quite seriously. In many cases where travel visas are required, you must notify them in advance of your trip so that they have time to vet you. In other parts of our great country we have proper border management. Why can we not have it in the southwest? There is no reason for it to be as porous as it is now.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, many have claimed that an open border is an element of social justice and that our country was built with massive assistance from immigrants. There is international law regarding refugee status and procedures and it is not being followed. Breaking our laws in the name of social justice has resulted in harm to our citizens, an increase in crime and sets a terrible example by our federal elected officials.

We urge this Committee to support this Resolution and to refer it to the Committee on Rules and Reference. Thank you.