



Testimony

House Bill 4635

Testimony Before the Texas Senate Committee on Border Security

By Melissa Ford Maldonado

Dear Chairman Birdwell, Vice Chair Flores, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 4635. My name is Melissa Ford Maldonado, and I am the policy director for Secure & Sovereign Texas, an initiative of the Texas Public Policy Foundation. The Foundation is grateful for your committee's leadership and efforts to help fix the crisis at the border and protect Texas and Texans.

In my role, much of my work focuses on critical issues such as border security, organized crime, drug trafficking, human smuggling, trade, and corruption & collusion by state actors in Mexico.

The Foundation's latest research on these topics provides a deep dive into the threat posed by Mexican drug cartels. We believe these criminal organizations are one of the largest criminal threats to the United States right now.

Mexican drug cartels have complete control over the border, recently labeled the most dangerous border in the world, and are devastating our communities with crime, drugs, and a humanitarian crisis. They are running a billion-dollar slave trade, and are now richer, more armed, and bolder than ever.

HB 4635 is a powerful tool for law enforcement agencies to combat organized crime and allow for the aggressive prosecution of Mexican cartels-related organized crime in the state. This bill provides us with a broader set of tools to investigate and prosecute organized crime and will allow the state of Texas to disrupt the operations of these criminal organizations, prosecute their members more aggressively, and weaken their ability to engage in illegal activities.

HB 4635 also creates significant penalties for those found guilty of violating the law, including fines, imprisonment, and forfeiture of assets. This can serve as a deterrent to individuals who might be considering joining a criminal organization and can help to disrupt the recruitment of new members.

We have seen and heard how cartels are ravaging our state with human smuggling and sex trafficking and flooding our cities with a record number of drugs and an unprecedented level of violence.

Unfortunately, we can't count on the Mexican government to be our ally on this. Our research shows there is a partnership between the cartels and the Mexican state. Cartels have infiltrated the Mexican government, military, and law enforcement, and they effectively control 30 to 40 percent of Mexico's territory. Therefore, the collusion between the Mexican state and organized crime is unlikely to lead to a reliable border security partnership between Texas or the U.S. and Mexico. That is why we must act, on the Texas side, and do everything we can to safeguard our communities from this destruction.

That is why we urge the passage of HB 4635. It is necessary to help create safer communities and send a strong message to criminal organizations and their members that their illegal activities will not be tolerated in Texas, and that they will face serious consequences if they are caught.

Thank you for your time. We are grateful for your consideration of HB 4635 today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

