



Testimony

Senate Bill 5

Testimony Before the Texas Senate Committee on Border Security

By Carine Martinez

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

My name is Carine Martinez, and I am the campaign director for Secure & Sovereign Texas at the Texas Public Policy Foundation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 5 today.

The Foundation's Secure & Sovereign Texas aims to find state solutions to secure our southern border. Much of our research focuses on our southern neighbor, Mexico, and the collusion that exists between the Mexican state and its criminal cartels. Our findings are disheartening: [Collusion is widespread](#), with government officials at the highest levels openly fraternizing with the cartels. A former U.S. ambassador to Mexico estimated that [up to 40% of the Mexican territory was now controlled by drug cartels](#).

Cartels have “diversified” their business and taken on human smuggling as they charge thousands of dollars—often depending on the origin of the migrant—per person they smuggle. The human smuggling “business” at our southern border is estimated to have grown into a [billion-dollar business](#) over the last decade.

Texas can ensure that any illicit human smuggling that Mexican cartels are bringing across the Texas–Mexico border is severely punished *in Texas*—whether it is undertaken by foreign operatives of drug cartels, or by Americans recruited by these cartels.

Our [research on the scourge of human smuggling](#) highlights the importance of Texas doing what it can to deter smugglers. According to the Department of Homeland Security, the percentage of illegal border crossers using a smuggler has steadily increased over the decades, reaching as high as 95% in 2006. As long as the southern border isn't fully secure, the number of people who seek to enter our state with the help of a smuggler is likely to increase.

The cartels-turned-smugglers also do not stop at the Texas–Mexico border. Cartels actively recruit Americans, [including teenagers](#), on social media to carry their smuggling business within the U.S.

Finally, [smuggling has negatively impacted not just the persons smuggled but also Texas communities](#), as the perpetrators of the offense often “bail out,”—that is, they rely on high-speed car chases to avoid being caught and often crash their cars in local communities if necessary to escape, leading to damage to private property and even the [tragic death of local residents](#).

For these reasons, SB 5 rightly seeks to deter this activity by increasing the existing penalties for the offenses of smuggling of persons and operating stash houses, including creating a 10-year mandatory minimum for certain conduct involving those offenses.

Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

