



TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 176

BY **Selene Rodriguez**, Texas Public Policy Foundation

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Good morning, Chairman Tepper and distinguished members of the committee.

My name is Selene Rodriguez, I am the campaign director for the Texas Public Policy Foundation's Secure & Sovereign Texas initiative, and I am here to testify in support of House Bill 176 today.

During the height of the border crisis we experienced under the Biden administration, dozens of states dedicated valuable personnel and resources to Texas in support of Operation Lone Star efforts ([DeMarco, 2024](#)).

Now, Texas has a historic opportunity to maximize our efforts not just at the border but in every community to ensure the safety of all American citizens. President Donald Trump has signed a series of executive orders recognizing the role that states have played in border security and ensuring they have the support to *continue* to do so.

To support these efforts, in 2023, the Legislature passed Senate Bill 1403 ([2023](#)), creating an Interstate Compact for Border Security. During debate on this legislation, Chairman Pete Flores stated that the intent of an interstate compact was to "use this model to be able to take the best practices of each state and integrate them, instead of operating in silos" ([2023](#)). When it comes to immigration enforcement and security efforts, each state has its own methods and preferences, but by bringing them together we can have a more unified approach to a significant issue our nation faces.

One thing we have learned the hard way is that the federal government cannot do the job of public safety alone, and neither can one state. To fully secure our borders and eliminate cartel activity in our communities, we need a multi-jurisdictional, all of government approach. It is important that while we have a friendly federal government, we take every step forward to codify strong public safety efforts, and that is what House Bill 176 aims to achieve.

Everything the state of Texas does to ensure the safety of Texans also helps ensure safety for all Americans, so we cannot fight alone. By working with other states to enhance our intelligence sharing, infrastructure and equipment, we can have a better understanding of the threats emanating from the southern border and how we can most effectively eliminate them.

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Further, this bill enhances the unique needs of today by addressing the federal government's removal efforts by stating "enforcing federal immigration laws, including the laws governing detecting, apprehending, detaining, prosecuting, releasing, and monitoring illegal aliens." By adding this provision, it ensures that participating entities continue to follow federal law rather than be swayed by administrative policies like catch and release. It also provides additional resources for the Department of Homeland Security for added facilities to house and remove illegal aliens, and law enforcement personnel targeting those eligible for removal.

Rather than hope the Trump administration will handle these matters alone, it is the time for us to seize the opportunity we have and ensure that states always have a say in matters of national security and public safety—one of the few legitimate roles of government.

Regardless of which political party governs the United States or who is president, Mexican cartels, designated by both President Trump and Governor Abbott as foreign terror organizations, and other transnational criminal organizations will continue to exploit vulnerabilities at our border to traffic drugs, weapons, and human beings. Enhanced detection and deflection efforts will help in directly combatting these organizations.

A well-resourced and organized border security apparatus serves all Americans, and that is why we support the passage of House Bill 176.

References

DeMarco, M. (2024, July 16). *States pledged hundreds of troops and spent millions to help Texas at the border so far this year*. Ohio Capital Journal. <https://ohiocapitaljournal.com/2024/07/16/states-pledged-hundreds-of-troops-and-spent-millions-to-help-texas-at-the-border-so-far-this-year/>

SB 1403. Enrolled. 88th Texas Legislature. Regular. (2023). <https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=88R&Bill=SB1403>

