

Good morning, Chairman Green, Ranking Member Thompson and members of the Committee. Thank you for inviting me to participate in today's hearing on this critical issue.

I am Gentner Drummond, and I was elected as Oklahoma's Attorney General in 2022.

As the chief law enforcement officer of Oklahoma, it is my duty to protect the people of my state. I am here to testify about the dangers my citizens face due to a porous border and the failure of the federal government to enforce the law.

In the early evening of November 20, 2022, law enforcement responded to a quadruple homicide after a Chinese national allegedly entered a garage on a 10-acre marijuana farm in Kingfisher County, about an hour's drive west of Oklahoma City. According to investigators, the man then pulled out a handgun and kept it trained on a group of people – also Chinese nationals – who were inside. He said they owed him \$300,000 that he had invested in the grow operation, and that they had exactly 30 minutes to pay up or he would kill them all.

According to investigators, the assailant killed three men, execution-style, with gunshots to the back of the head, and one woman with two shots to the abdomen. Another man sustained a gunshot wound but survived after being medi-flighted for emergency surgery. It took personnel from six law enforcement agencies to process the gruesome scene.

Much to the credit of law enforcement, police arrested the suspect in Florida two days later.

The carnage of that day is but one tragic example of a failed system plagued by failing leadership. Throughout Oklahoma, law enforcement comes into daily contact with foreign nationals who entered our country illegally or who remain here illegally — or both. This is tragic and common in Oklahoma's illegal marijuana grow operations.

The voters of Oklahoma legalized medical marijuana in 2018. While that legalization led to some legitimate cannabis-related businesses, organized criminals have overtaken the industry.

Our law enforcement partners report that the foreign nationals most often involved in these illegal enterprises come from China and Mexico. We have identified individuals from many other countries, to include Cuba, Bulgaria and Russia.

The one thing these criminals have in common is that they have no regard for our laws or public safety. Criminal illegal immigrants are not content with only growing black-market marijuana. They also produce and distribute fentanyl, and they engage in sex trafficking and labor trafficking.

Oklahoma's law enforcement community fights a constant battle against these evils. The Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation, and scores of municipal and county law enforcement agencies deserve much praise for their heroic efforts. Thanks to the leadership of Director Donnie Anderson, the director of the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics, his agents and law enforcement partners have seized countless tons of dangerous drugs and arrested untold numbers of traffickers. It should be no surprise to this committee that many of these criminals are foreign nationals who entered this country illegally through our unsecured southern border.

Even the state agency that was created to regulate the legal marijuana market has been forced to combat the explosion of illegal grows. My office has a strong partnership with the Oklahoma Medical Marijuana Authority, led by Director Adria Berry, which provides critical information to our agents and other law enforcement. Thanks to this collaboration, we are able to identify and investigate criminal enterprises that all too often are operated by foreign nationals.

While there have been great successes, the ongoing border crisis ensures a never-ending flood of illegal foreign nationals who continue to perpetrate criminal activities that endanger our people. You may wonder how these foreign nationals have infiltrated the medical marijuana industry in Oklahoma. The pattern is a common one. Foreign operatives conduct a "straw" purchase of rural property just outside city limits. Sometimes they have a front man lease the real estate. Either way, they take steps to conceal their activities. It is common to see that they have pushed up a

berm to prevent visibility from the roads. They often will post armed personnel to stand watch and imply threat.

Members, you can imagine the impact these kinds of actions have in communities throughout rural Oklahoma. Families are scared. They feel unsafe. Smaller law enforcement departments are literally out-manned and out-gunned, and they feel ill-equipped to address the threat.

When I was sworn in as Attorney General, I pledged to the people of Oklahoma that I would do everything in my power to protect them from these dangerous criminals. I petitioned our legislature for greater resources and broader authority to combat this threat. They responded with millions of dollars for equipment and personnel, and they granted my office more power to fight this criminal epidemic being fueled by the border crisis.

In response, I established the Organized Crime Task Force. It is the first of its kind for Oklahoma. And, of course, it is needed because federal officials have failed to enforce the law and secure the border. In the short seven months since its creation, the Organized Crime Task Force has investigated and is prosecuting more than 50 complex, multi-jurisdictional criminal cases. The vast majority of these cases involve Mexican or Chinese drug syndicates.

Because these foreign actors have no vested interest in the well-being of our communities, law enforcement officials have discovered rampant building-code violations that, in turn, have led to fires and explosions. In one case alone, fire at an illegal marijuana grow destroyed more than 10,000 acres and necessitated deploying the National Guard and other agencies across Oklahoma and Texas. In the wake of such incidents, my office demanded strict enforcement of building codes against these illegal foreign operators. As a result, approximately one-half of the marijuana grows in the state were found to be out of compliance. That translates to thousands of unsafe operations across Oklahoma, putting lives and communities at risk.

These foreign actors are creating additional costs that cannot fully be quantified. For instance, the Oklahoma Department of Corrections reports that it currently houses nearly 500 illegal

immigrants convicted of state crimes. At an average cost of \$63.53 per inmate per day, the State of Oklahoma pays roughly \$11 million per year to incarcerate criminal illegals.

Before those criminal aliens were sent to the Department of Corrections, they were in the custody of a local jail, who have their own costs for housing. Likewise, there is a significant cost for law enforcement to investigate these crimes and for prosecutors to prosecute them.

The unsecure border contributes to costs beyond the criminal justice system as well. Oklahoma's water resource authority reports of strain on the utility grid when these operations – which employ no one legally and give nothing back to the community – demand commercial levels of water consumption. We have seen instances where a lone farmhouse is purchased by a foreign entity and a line that once consumed 3,000 to 4,000 gallons a month began consuming tens or hundreds of thousands of gallons monthly. This can equal the consumption of the entire local grid. Other bad actors drill un-permitted wells and draw down from the subterranean water of legitimate farmers, sometimes eliminating the source supply completely. Once these operations have run their course, the criminals simply pull up stakes overnight, leaving behind dilapidated, unsafe structures that are an environmental blight and a threat to public safety.

Additionally, it is widely understood that Oklahoma, like every other state, bears a significant financial burden related to the routine services that must be provided to those who are here illegally. While it is not possible to ascertain the exact amount of that cost to Oklahoma, it is easy to understand the magnitude of that cost. The State bears the burden for the education, health and welfare of a robust and growing illegal population. It is estimated that well over 100,000 live among us, costing Oklahoma taxpayers more than \$750 million each year – with minimal offsetting return.

It is important to note that the illegal immigrant population in Oklahoma is vulnerable to exploitation. My office has observed many instances where members of this population become victims of horrific crimes. Every case being investigated by my Organized Crime Task Force – *every* single case – involves some level of undocumented labor trafficking. Law enforcement is seeing this particularly in operations run by Chinese nationals. Officers see tell-tale signs such as abandoned and substandard living conditions for workers and a complete disregard for human

welfare, not to mention countless Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) violations. We have examples of illegal workers being fed from dog-food bowls, and our agents plan to begin using so-called “cadaver” dogs to find potential unknown victims of these wretched conditions.

During an investigation into illegal drug activities by Chinese nationals, our agents recently coordinated with other law enforcement to serve simultaneous warrants on multiple addresses. At one location, agents found two female Chinese nationals, who spoke no English. Mattresses on the floor of their bedroom were littered with condoms, lotion and other unsavory supplies. The women had been in the country for months, but they could not say where they were and they had not been out of the house since their arrival. They simply awoke every day, worked and went back to sleep. This living horror, which was merely *incidental* to the initial investigation, further illustrates the human cost of allowing persons to remain unsafe and undocumented.

These foreign actors are blatant and cavalier in their efforts. Our investigators are finding job advertisements on international websites targeting and recruiting poor and rural Chinese. These ads, in Mandarin, are thinly veiled offerings to engage in criminal activity. One particularly distasteful ad recruits “girls under 50” for “purely formal bed” and “four days off a month.” Another offers jobs for a “massage spa” to people who are “able to endure hardships” and who have “good hygiene.”

Illegal aliens forced into this clandestine world have nowhere to turn. On the occasions that Oklahoma law enforcement *does* find people at these operations, agents resort to Google Translate attempting to communicate with Mandarin-speaking workers. The agents contact HSI, but invariably they are told that the system is too overloaded for the federal government to assist.

In the end, our officers know it doesn’t really matter whether HSI responds. We confirm that anyone brought in to HSI will simply be released. Without appropriate recourse, officers typically are forced to leave the victimized illegal aliens where they were found.

The upshot is this: If an immigrant claims he or she has entered the country before November 1

of 2020, to be deported they must have incurred at least two DUIs or a DUI plus a more egregious crime. This situation puts the criminal in control. The local field office director of HSI has been disempowered from removing persons without convictions, even if they are repeatedly implicated in criminal reports. Illegal immigrants are also taking advantage of VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) programs or DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) participation.

And it is important to remember that the crimes of these foreign actors range from prostitution to money-laundering to underground casinos. Among the Mexican drug cartels, the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and federal authorities have seen increased activity from cartels such as La Familia, the New Generation Jalisco Cartel and the notorious Sinaloa Cartel.

With the cartels harvesting so much marijuana in Oklahoma, the issue is no longer about smuggled marijuana from Mexico. Rather, the contraband of choice is now fentanyl, a narcotic as addictive as it is deadly. In this regard, the director of the Houston High-Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, Mike McDaniel, reports that we are seeing unprecedented levels of partnership between Chinese nationals and the Mexican cartels operating along the southwest border. Chinese and Mexican nationals work alongside the cartels to produce the opioid in labs in Mexico before transporting it across the border. Director McDaniel indicates the cooperation extends to organized distribution schemes to the U.S. The illicit fentanyl industry is incredibly lucrative. One gram, roughly the weight of a single Sweet & Low packet, can produce 500 pills at an expense of about 10 cents. On the street, each pill sells for between \$10 and \$20.

When Oklahoma law enforcement first interdicted large quantities, we were not seeing an equivalent amount on the street, which led us to believe that the supply was supporting drug habits of insular communities such as foreign-run marijuana grow operations. Tragically, that threat has now invaded our own communities. In 2017, Oklahoma recorded 54 fentanyl overdoses. Only five years later, that number grew to 474. While final figures for this past year are not yet known, we do know there were 317 fentanyl deaths in the first *five* months of 2023 *alone*. The situation has become so dire, in fact, Oklahoma's Department of Mental Health now

operates vending machines for Naloxone, which is used to treat people who are overdosing on an opioid.

The opioid user is not the only one put in harm's way. In August of last year, law enforcement officers in northern Oklahoma responded to a local residence for a welfare check. An officer checking out the premises unknowingly was exposed to fentanyl. He collapsed to the ground, unconscious. The officer's partner was able to administer a triple dose of Naloxone to bring him back from the brink of death.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I believe it is time for accountability. The people of Oklahoma don't deserve to live under constant threat from criminal foreign nationals. The people of Oklahoma don't deserve to have their communities flooded with illegal drugs that were smuggled across our unsecure border. Oklahoma families don't deserve to have their loved ones ripped away by those same drugs.

Members, once the hearing process is concluded, you will have a very weighty decision to make. I trust that each of you has great respect for that solemn duty, and that you will make your decision with great care and deliberation.

As I conclude my testimony here today, I want to ask you to remember the people of Oklahoma as you deliberate. Remember the murder victims, and the drug overdose victims, and the families who mourn them. And of course, please remember the law enforcement officers who risk their lives every day to protect us from it all.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and members of the Committee.