



# EVERY TEXAN

Formerly Center for Public Policy Priorities

## **Testimony to the Senate Finance Committee on SB 1: Article V – Border Security**

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Texans, no matter their place of birth or families' history in the state, deserve a budget that ensures funded programs are efficient and effective uses of our collective bank account. While there have been hard decisions in the past to fund or not fund critical services, the Legislature has worked to make those decisions with as much care and attention to the purpose and outcome of the policies it has chosen to pursue. It is worrisome, then, that we are discussing a budget that continues to spend billions of dollars on a program that has yet to show its efficiency or effectiveness at deterring undocumented migration to and through Texas. Campaign slogans and rally chants do not make for reasoned and well thought policies, and this committee should not spend another \$4.6 billion on programs that will never achieve their stated purpose: to deter every person – father, mother or child – from attempting to enter Texas between ports of entry or without official documentation.

Texas has, for more than a decade, chosen to spend its valuable resources on so-called border security rather than paying for critical services that could benefit Texans and their families. Among Article V agencies, for example, the quixotic focus on preventing undocumented migration has had terrible consequences in the last year. The underfunded Juvenile Justice Department is notorious for the lack of security provided to the children in its custody. The Department of Criminal Justice has similarly been underfunded to meet its purpose in recent years. So much so, that despite recent pay increases, prison staff are some of the lowest paid employees in the state and suffer from the same lack of air conditioning as the prisoners they guard. More so, we have seen how underpaid, overworked prison staff in dilapidated facilities led to the escape of a violent criminal and the unnecessary death of innocent Texans. Yet we are to believe there was a “net-zero” effect to those two agencies because of Operation Lone Star related budget transfers.

Budgets are moral documents, and for too long we have allowed our morals as Texans to be diminished by funding inefficient and ineffective policies inspired by dangerous “invasion” rhetoric. All the while, critical functions of the state are left under-resourced, and staff are forced to do more with less as inflation skyrocketed over the last two years. If passed as currently written, the State will have spent or proposed almost \$12 billion over the last decade to a “deterrence” policy that has yet to deter a single person from seeking better opportunities or asylum in Texas and the United States.

Texans of all backgrounds and legal statuses deserve a budget that supports actual public safety efforts and programs that benefit the state beyond the constantly moving or redefined metrics as we have seen with Operation Lone Star and other so-called border security efforts.

The proposed \$3.4 billion for DPS and the Military Department in SB1 to continue Operation Lone Star activities will be wasted, just as the nearly \$8 billion spent over the last decade has been wasted, on policies that have yet to show their effectiveness. As long people see the opportunity to live a better, safer, more prosperous life in Texas or the United States, and as long as violent “invasion” rhetoric continues to shape federal policies, there will be people choosing to migrate to or through Texas. Instead of burning money on a failed program, the Legislature should support federal legislation and funding to increase pathways for legal migration because we need the workers and they need the work.

Total Border Security Spending  
Since 80th Regular Session in Millions

