

Verbal Opening Statement
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DEA Los Angeles Field Division

Chairman Grassley, Ranking Member Durbin, and
distinguished Members of the Committee—

Thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. I appear on behalf of the men and women of DEA's Los Angeles Division—agents, analysts, and support staff who work every day on the front lines of the synthetic drug crisis in one of the most strategically important regions in the country—protecting the American people from those who profit in death.

I wish I could begin with a statistic or a chart.

But the truth is better understood in silence—in the stillness of a teenager's bedroom whose phone never lights up again, and whose laughter that once echoed through the house has gone quiet. All because of a single counterfeit pill, made for ten cents in a clandestine lab and sold on our streets for twenty-five dollars. That is the price of American life today.

I lead the DEA's Los Angeles Field Division. We are not dealing with street dealers or smuggling mules. What we face today in Southern California is a full-scale infiltration by foreign criminal empires: the Sinaloa Cartel and the Jalisco New Generation Cartel—paramilitary organizations with global supply chains, corporate-level logistics, and battlefield tactics.

Just weeks ago, we raided a cartel stash site in downtown Los Angeles—a warehouse not far from our own office. Inside, painted across the wall from floor to ceiling, was a mural of "El Mencho," the CJNG's most ruthless leader, clad in a bulletproof vest and flanked by the cartel's insignia. A shrine. Not hidden in the jungle or some remote compound, but right in the heart of America's second largest city. The message was clear: We are here. We are among you.

During the trial of Menchito, son of CJNG's top leader, cartel operatives were caught surveilling DEA agents and informants—right here in Washington, D.C.

As a direct result of the capture and prosecution of Menchito, CJNG struck back in Mexico, shooting the wife and killing the daughter of a cooperating informant and killing a Mexican Army soldier.

This is who we are up against: a paramilitary cartel with global reach, willing to kill families and surveil U.S. personnel on our own soil. This isn't just crime—it's terror.

We later uncovered that El Mencho's own daughter and son-in-law were living in a gated Riverside neighborhood—just down the street from the Chief of Police. When we executed that warrant, we seized garbage bags stuffed with Rolex watches, designer shoes, and luxury handbags totaling over \$2.5 million in assets and over \$1 million in cash.

These people weren't hiding in shadows. They were hiding in plain sight—shopping in our stores, sending their kids to our schools, and laundering death through the American dream.

These cartels do not just destroy lives, they destroy communities. They exploit our ports, highways, banks, and increasingly, our immigration system. While many who cross our border seek opportunity and refuge, cartels weaponize chaos. They flood smuggling routes with both poison and people. They recruit from migrant populations, coerce cooperation through fear and debt, and use human life as both shield and currency.

The border crisis isn't separate from the cartel crisis—it's one and the same. In recent days, the streets of Los Angeles have been rocked by unrest related to immigration enforcement. Let me be absolutely clear: The DEA's role in immigration is narrow, targeted, and mission-critical.

Through our Title 8 authority, we support immigration investigations that directly intersect with drug trafficking and violent crime. We cannot ignore that cartel-linked smugglers are actively embedded in these networks. And when they embed, they do not just traffic people—they traffic power. Power that turns into fentanyl, firearms, and fear. What's happening in Los Angeles right now is a symptom of something far more dangerous: criminal

networks sow chaos and try to erode public trust, because the cartels thrive when our institutions are divided.

But we are not divided. Not in DEA. We are united by duty, by mission, and by memory.

Earlier this year, the Los Angeles Field Division helped bring to justice the man who orchestrated the torture and murder of Special Agent Kiki Camarena—nearly four decades after his death. Because in DEA, we never forget. And we never stop.

Whether it takes four weeks or forty years, if you harm the American people, we will find you. If you take one of our own, we will bring you to justice.

That's not a motto. That's a promise.

We are proud of the work we've done in Los Angeles—targeting cartel leadership, dismantling synthetic drug operations, and reclaiming neighborhoods block by block.

But pride alone won't stop the next overdose. Or dismantle the next lab. Or freeze the next \$10 million in dirty crypto.

That takes resolve—and resources.

I, as not just a DEA agent, but a dad, am extremely grateful for the bipartisan passage of the HALT Fentanyl Act, but we need this Committee's continued bipartisan support to continue this fight across every shadow the cartels hide in.

The cartels do not retreat—and neither do we.

Behind every investigation, every arrest, every seizure, there is a child who should still be alive. A mother who should still be smiling. A community that should still be whole.

This is not just a public health emergency.

It is a moral one.

And we will not stop.

Not until every child has a chance to grow up.

Not until every parent can open their child's bedroom door and find life—not loss—on the other side.

Because the families can't wait. The crisis won't pause. And the cartels won't stop.

DEA is not new to this fight. But the fight is changing. And we are ready.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.