



Testimony on the Community Effects of Operation Lone Star

Esther Reyes, Director of Immigration Policy and Advocacy, Children's Defense Fund - Texas

November 15, 2022

Chairman Birdwell and honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Border Security, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Esther Reyes, and I am the Director of Immigration Policy and Advocacy for the Children's Defense Fund - Texas (CDF-TX). We are a nonprofit children's advocacy organization that believes no child is expendable and that advocates for the right of all children and their families - regardless of immigration status – to be safe and healthy.

CDF-TX stands firmly against Operation Lone Star (OLS), a racist operation that wastes billions of Texas taxpayer dollars while Texans continue to face barriers to essential services like healthcare and quality public education.

Here are just a few well-known facts about OLS:

- Governor Abbott's racist operation has cost Texans over [4 billion dollars](#) in taxpayer money. A significant portion of these funds were used without authorization from the state legislature.
- OLS is designed to criminalize and deport migrants. Since its inception, at least [6,000 migrants](#) have been prosecuted for "trespassing" charges. Increasing evidence suggests that law enforcement agencies are fabricating these charges.
- OLS both fuels and is fueled by [white supremacist rhetoric](#) that is harmful to all Texans.

In short, OLS hurts our communities and diverts funds from essential services, like access to health coverage and quality public education.

Texas leads the nation with the highest uninsured rate at nearly double the national average, for children and overall. Border communities, who are bearing the brunt of OLS, already suffer from greater degrees of poverty than the rest of the state. Almost [half of the border population is uninsured](#), and more than [\\$3 billion is lost](#) annually in productivity to chronic illness. Rather than wasting taxpayer dollars on a racist operation, our state leaders must remove barriers to help children and their families get the health coverage they need.

Another significant challenge facing the Texas economy and Texas families is the lack of access to quality public education. Texas is failing its students. [One of every five students](#) in Texas does not graduate high school, and the possibility of reaching zero attrition in Texas is becoming more and more distant. Border school districts are the least funded in Texas, so it is no surprise that educational outcomes among border district students are lagging behind. Our state leaders must invest in ensuring there is sufficient opportunity and support for all children.

If we are truly concerned with the well-being of our communities, we must put an end to OLS today. If we are truly concerned with the prosperity of all Texans, we must invest *in* our communities, not in a failed, unconstitutional and deeply racist immigration enforcement operation.