

Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record.

For most Americans, January 19, 2025, was an ordinary day.

For my family, it was the day our lives were permanently altered.

That night, my twenty-year-old daughter Katie was riding with friends in Urbana, Illinois. Their vehicle was stopped at a red light.

They were exactly where they were supposed to be.

They were obeying the law.

They posed a danger to no one.

In a matter of seconds, an intoxicated illegal immigrant driving at nearly 80 miles per hour crashed into the back of their vehicle.

Katie was killed.

Another young woman was killed.

Three other young people suffered serious injuries.

The impact was so violent that first responders fought desperately to save lives at the scene. While they worked to free victims from the wreckage, the man responsible fled.

My daughter's future ended at that intersection.

Everything she should have experienced—graduating from college, beginning a career, finding love, getting married, raising a family, and growing old surrounded by people who loved her—was taken from her in an instant.

Katie was bright, compassionate, athletic, and deeply loved. She had an extraordinary ability to make people feel welcome and valued. She approached life with optimism, kindness, and a genuine interest in others. She had friends from many different backgrounds and possessed a rare gift for making people feel seen and appreciated.

As a father, one of the greatest privileges of my life was watching my children grow into adulthood and begin building lives of their own.

Katie deserved that opportunity.

She deserved decades of birthdays, holidays, accomplishments, disappointments, adventures, and ordinary moments that together make up a life.

Instead, she received a grave.

Today, we live with a loss that never leaves us. We visit and tend to Katie's grave when we should be watching her finish college, begin a career, and build the future that was taken from her.

Instead, we visit and tend to her premature grave, a permanent reminder of the future that was taken from her.

As devastating as Katie's death is, what brings me before Congress is not only what happened that night.

It is everything that happened before it.

Because Katie's death did not occur in a vacuum.

The individual responsible for this crash was Julio Cucul-Bol, a Guatemalan national who had previously been deported from the United States before illegally reentering the country.

After the crash, he fled.

He was later apprehended in Texas while attempting to avoid responsibility for what he had done.

His actions that night were reckless and inexcusable. He bears responsibility for the choices he made.

But congressional oversight requires us to examine more than the final act in a tragedy.

It requires us to examine the chain of events that made that tragedy possible.

A previously deported individual returned to the United States.

He remained here.

He lived under a false identity.

He obtained an Illinois driver's license.

He was authorized to drive on Illinois roads.

He drove intoxicated.

Two young women ended up dead.

Those are not opinions.

Those are facts.

The question before this Subcommittee is straightforward:

At what point should the system have worked?

At what point should safeguards have functioned as intended?

At what point should government agencies have coordinated effectively?

At what point should public officials have acted?

Was it at the border? During identity verification? During the licensing process? During enforcement of our drunk-driving laws? The answer should not be none of the above.

Because if government exists to protect the public, then every step in that chain deserves examination.

One of the most troubling questions in this case involves something many Americans take for granted: the process required to obtain a driver's license.

In court proceedings, Mr. Cucul-Bol testified through an interpreter that he could not read, write, or speak English. He also testified that he could not read, write, or speak Spanish. His primary language was identified as K'iche', an indigenous Mayan language spoken in Guatemala.

Yet despite those circumstances, he was issued a valid Illinois driver's license.

That raises serious questions.

Was a driver's examination available in K'iche'? If not, how was competency determined? How could someone who could not read English or Spanish safely understand road signs, traffic warnings, and the rules of the road?

Before Julio Cucul-Bol ever chose to drive drunk, government officials chose to put him behind the wheel.

I am not raising these questions to assign blame to any individual employee or agency worker. I raise them because the public deserves confidence that government systems designed to protect public safety are functioning as intended.

A driver's license is not simply a form of identification. It is government authorization to operate a vehicle capable of causing tremendous harm when used irresponsibly.

The public has a right to understand how that authorization was granted.

What verification procedures were followed?

What testing standards were applied?

What safeguards existed to ensure competency and understanding?

Were those safeguards adequate?

Were they followed?

If they were followed, should they be reexamined?

These are legitimate oversight questions.

When a preventable tragedy occurs, government should welcome those questions rather than avoid them.

Public confidence depends on transparency.

And transparency requires answers.

Katie's death also raises broader questions about the relationship between federal immigration enforcement and state-level policies.

Reasonable people can disagree about immigration policy.

Reasonable people can disagree about enforcement priorities.

What should not be controversial is the expectation that different levels of government communicate effectively when public safety is at stake.

The individual who killed my daughter had previously been deported from the United States.

That fact alone should cause every policymaker to ask a simple question:

What information existed, where did it exist, and who had access to it?

If information existed but was not shared, why not?

If information was shared but not acted upon, why not?

If legal barriers prevented effective coordination, should those barriers be reexamined?

Government systems are often described as separate jurisdictions with separate responsibilities.

Citizens do not experience government that way.

Citizens expect government to function as a system.

Families do not care which agency possessed which piece of information after a tragedy has occurred.

Families want to know why the information was not effectively used before the tragedy occurred.

That is not a political question.

It is a governance question.

And it deserves a serious answer.

No serious person disputes that Julio Cucul-Bol bears responsibility for the choices he made.

He chose to drive intoxicated.

He chose to drive at a reckless speed.

He chose to flee after the crash.

He bears responsibility for those actions.

But accountability cannot end there.

If accountability ends with the individual offender, then government is relieved of any obligation to examine whether preventable failures contributed to the outcome.

That is not how oversight works.

When an airplane crashes, investigators do not stop after identifying the pilot.

They examine every contributing factor.

They examine systems.

They examine procedures.

They examine failures.

They identify weaknesses.

And they recommend changes.

The goal is not merely to assign blame.

The goal is to prevent repetition.

The same principle should apply here.

A previously deported individual did not simply appear at the scene of the crash by accident.

He crossed the border, remained in the country, lived under a false identity, obtained a government-issued driver's license, and ultimately ended up behind the wheel on the night my daughter was killed.

A series of decisions, policies, procedures, and failures preceded that moment.

Congress has both the authority and the responsibility to examine those factors honestly.

If those failures are identified, they should be corrected.

If those policies increased preventable risk, they should be reconsidered.

If those safeguards proved inadequate, they should be strengthened.

That is not punishment.

That is accountability.

And accountability is how a society learns from tragedy rather than merely mourns it.

One lesson I have learned through this experience is that there is a significant difference between intentions and outcomes.

Public officials frequently ask to be judged by their intentions.

Families affected by policy failures live with outcomes.

Intentions do not change what happened to Katie.

Intentions do not restore stolen futures.

Intentions do not bring victims home.

Outcomes matter.

Results matter.

Accountability matters.

Every public policy creates incentives.

When immigration laws are inconsistently enforced, incentives change.

When previously deported individuals successfully return to the United States, incentives change.

When state and federal authorities fail to communicate effectively, incentives change.

When identity verification systems fail, incentives change.

Recognizing these realities is not ideological.

It is practical.

Good public policy begins with an honest assessment of how people actually behave, not how we wish they behaved.

My own family's story illustrates that point.

My parents immigrated legally to the United States more than sixty years ago from a developing country.

Like millions of lawful immigrants, they respected the process because they respected the country.

They came to America seeking opportunity, not entitlement.

They worked hard.

They followed the law.

They raised their family to believe that citizenship carries responsibilities as well as rights.

They believed deeply in the idea that America is a nation governed by laws.

That belief shaped my life.

It shaped Katie's life.

And it shaped our understanding of the relationship between citizens and government.

We honored our obligations.

Government failed to honor one of its most fundamental obligations to us.

Government asks citizens to obey the law, pay taxes, serve on juries, and trust public institutions.

That trust depends on a belief that government is fulfilling its most basic responsibilities.

When preventable failures take innocent lives and no one is willing to honestly examine those failures, that trust begins to erode.

The consequences of policy failures are rarely borne by those who create them.

Families bear them.

Victims bear them.

Communities bear them.

The policymakers responsible for those decisions continue with their lives.

The families left behind do not.

Every morning my family wakes up to the reality that Katie is gone.

Every holiday reminds us she is missing.

Every milestone reminds us she should be here.

Every visit to her grave reminds us of what was taken.

The years ahead that should have been filled with graduations, weddings, grandchildren, and family celebrations now exist only in our imagination.

That is the true cost of preventable failure.

One of the most frustrating aspects of this experience has been the refusal of many public officials to honestly examine whether policies contributed to preventable harm.

Silence has become a substitute for accountability.

Deflection has become a substitute for answers.

Too often, when tragedies like Katie's are discussed, the response is immediate and predictable.

Crime happens everywhere.

Citizens commit crimes too.

Those statements are true.

They are also irrelevant to the question before this Subcommittee.

The question is not whether crime exists.

The question is whether this death could have been prevented.

Could stronger enforcement have prevented it?

Could better coordination have prevented it?

Could more effective safeguards have prevented it?

Could greater accountability have prevented it?

Those are the questions that matter.

Every preventable death deserves serious examination.

Not because doing so changes the past.

But because doing so may change the future.

Katie's life cannot be reduced to a statistic used to defend a policy.

She cannot become collateral damage in a political argument.

She was a real person.

She mattered.

And the circumstances that led to her death deserve honest examination.

Congress cannot undo what happened to Katie.

No hearing will bring her back.

No report will restore the future that was taken from her.

But Congress can do something important.

It can identify failures.

It can demand transparency.

It can strengthen oversight.

It can insist that agencies answer difficult questions.

It can ensure that policies are evaluated based on outcomes rather than intentions.

And it can help reduce the likelihood that another family experiences what mine has experienced.

The purpose of oversight is not to protect agencies.

It is not to protect reputations.

It is not to protect political narratives.

It is to protect the American people.

Katie should be alive today.

She should be planning her future.

She should be laughing with friends.

She should be arguing with her siblings.

She should be building a life.

Instead, we visit a cemetery.

Instead, we tend a grave.

Instead, we carry a loss that will remain with us for the rest of our lives.

Katie lost her future on January 19, 2025.

My family lost ours with her.

I respectfully ask this Subcommittee to pursue the facts wherever they lead, examine failures honestly, demand accountability from those entrusted with public authority, and remember that behind every policy debate are real families whose lives can be changed forever by decisions made far from the consequences.

Thank you for allowing me to share Katie's story.