

**Statement of Representative Katie Porter (CA-45)**  
**House Committee on the Budget Members' Day**  
**May 17, 2022**

Chairman Yarmuth, Ranking Member Smith, and Members of the Budget Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

As you prepare the Budget Resolution for Fiscal Year 2023, I urge you to consider increasing the budget authority for the federal law enforcement programs included in Budget Function 750. This budget category includes important agencies such as the Department of Justice, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

These agencies are responsible for confronting enormous challenges for our country and they need more resources to better serve Americans. Just last week, the CDC reported that more than 107,000 Americans died from drug overdoses in 2021, the highest annual death toll on record. Since the 1970s, the number of drug overdose deaths has increased every year except one.

This devastating drug epidemic is happening at the same time as the nation grapples with an epidemic of gun violence. Last year was the worst year for gun violence in decades. More than 45,000 Americans died in gun-related incidents in 2020, an all-time high, with no signs of a decline in gun deaths over the past year. The record number of Americans dying from drugs and guns demands a crisis response from our law enforcement agencies.

Law enforcement must also respond to the humanitarian crisis on our Southern Border. In March, Customs and Border Protection encountered the third-highest number of migrants entering the United States in a single month ever. Over the past decade, tens of thousands of unaccompanied children and families have arrived at our border seeking asylum. I have advocated for Congress to pass legislation as soon as possible to provide supplemental funding for law enforcement and humanitarian organizations at the border. This funding would improve our capacity to respond to the immediate crisis, but Congress needs to act now to address the border and immigration in future years.

Congress must also act to address inflation, another crisis that demands a law enforcement response. For decades, antitrust enforcement has declined while corporations have grown bigger and stronger. Corporations now have the market power to raise prices for consumers far beyond what is necessary to cover their costs. This is great for big business, but a disaster for ordinary Americans. Corporate profits hit a record high last year, growing 25% in just one year, while wages for workers only increased 4.5%.

President Biden's proposed budget would decrease the deficit, which will help slow down inflation. But cutting spending for law enforcement would be the wrong approach if we want lower prices for consumers. Instead, we need to increase the size of the Antitrust Division at the Department of Justice so that it can crack down on the massive corporations that are exploiting their market power to price gouge Americans.

These four crises demand the attention of our federal government. They will not be solved without a sustained federal response over the next decade. Congress needs to provide our law enforcement agencies with adequate budgets to make real progress addressing these long-term challenges for our nation.

As you consider priorities for Fiscal Year 2023, I urge you to consider increasing legislative budgets related to oversight. As a member dedicated to oversight work, my experiences have shown me firsthand that our oversight committees are not sufficiently funded to actively monitor our federal programs and agencies. Too often, we are sending money out the door without the safeguards in place to make sure that every dollar is spent wisely. The American people expect better stewardship of their taxpayer dollars, and they deserve more effort to prevent fraud and reduce waste. It is not enough to provide funding for Inspectors General to conduct investigations and write reports. Congress must also conduct its own oversight to fulfill our duty to the American people. The buck stops with us.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak today. I am happy to answer any questions.