The Data for a Secured Border Act

To keep our border safe and secure, every agency within the Department of Homeland Security needs to work in lockstep towards a shared goal. This is only possible when communication throughout the Department is quick and efficient, data and border security metrics are shared between agencies, and Congress is appropriately informed so they're able to direct the appropriate resources.

Over the years, the Department of Homeland Security has taken several steps to improve communication:

- In 2014, DHS reestablished the Joint Requirements Council (JRC) to increase efficiency at the department by identifying opportunities for programs with similar mission needs to develop joint capabilities and to reduce redundancy. The JRC aims to streamline internal communications and make them more effective partners to our local and state officials on the front lines of border operations.
    - However, a 2023 GAO report found that, despite the JRC being designed to make recommendations to DHS leadership, leadership had not regularly engaged with the JRC. Additionally, the report found the council hadn't followed its own guidance when approving "joint capability" projects.
- The 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) required DHS to report on 43 measures of border security effectiveness.
    - The same 2023 GAO report found that in 2021, DHS reported on only 37 of the required 43 metrics, and that only 21 of the 37 metrics reported generally corresponded with the definitions in the 2017 NDAA.
    - Moreover, DHS has not engaged with Congress on ways to improve the usefulness of the border security metrics report.
- In November 2023, DHS announced a new Office of Homeland Security Statistics (OHSS), which aims "to foster transparency and data-driven homeland security decision-making by analyzing and disseminating timely, objective Department of Homeland Security data and statistics."

Improvements still need to be made. Rep. Greg Stanton (AZ-04) and Juan Ciscomani's (AZ-06) bipartisan **Data for a Secured Border Act** would further incorporate the OHSS by requiring the DHS to utilize OHSS to submit a report on the usefulness of the border security metrics.

The bill would also require DHS to submit a report to Congress that evaluates the Joint Requirement Council including:

- An assessment of the workforce and responsibilities of the JRC;
- A determination of if the JRC is meeting its intent;
- A description of how the JRC assists DHS in disrupting the flow of fentanyl across the border, addressing the backlog of migrant processing, and incorporating technological advances into border management;
- A review of the JRCs recommendations, the approval and direct related follow-on activities, and the direction and guidance to the JRC from the Secretary or the Secretary.