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Plaskett Joins Congressional Colleagues in Push to Stop Drug Trafficking Between USVI, PR, and Florida

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Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett announced Friday that she recently joined her colleague Rep. Jennifer González-Colón (PR) to introduce The Caribbean Border Counternarcotics Strategy Act, along with Senators Rick Scott and Alex Padilla who introduced the bill on the Senate side.

According to the congresswoman, the Act is designed to stop the illegal trafficking of deadly drugs in the Caribbean, specifically between Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Florida. This bill builds off prior appropriations report language requiring that a Caribbean Border Counternarcotic Strategy is published by the White House Office of National Drug Policy along with the National Drug Control Strategy, the Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy, and the Northern Border Counternarcotics Strategy, Ms. Plaskett said.

“With a keen awareness that the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, along with the remainder of the Caribbean and South America are gateways for international drug trafficking, my team and I worked to combat this issue, including our work on a 2020 NDAA amendment (which was included in the final bill) that would require the Coast Guard to report to Congress on drug interdiction in the Caribbean basin,” she said. “The Caribbean Border Counternarcotics Strategy Act is the natural next step in our country’s efforts to understand and effectively combat the ongoing threat of Caribbean drug trafficking. I am honored to join my fellow colleagues in leading this bill to bring both the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico fully into the vital work of drug interdiction in our region.”

The Caribbean Border Counternarcotics Strategy Act would do the following:

- Ensure the Federal government has a strategy in place to prevent the flow of illicit drugs through the Caribbean region and into the United States by codifying in statute the requirement for ONDCP to issue a Caribbean Border Counternarcotics Strategy—just as Congress has codified the requirement for the Southwest Border and the Northern Border Counternarcotics Strategies.
- Require the Caribbean Border Counternarcotics Strategy to include measures to combat drug trafficking and drug-related violent crime in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, as well as recommendations for additional assistance and authorities needed by Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies.
- Add a definition for “State” and “United States” in ONDCP’s authorization to clarify the inclusion of the U.S. territories.
- Amend the definition of “supply reduction” in ONDCP’s authorization to ensure the National Drug Control Strategy and its supplemental border strategies include efforts to tackle the financial networks of drug trafficking organizations.

Senator Rick Scott said, “Every day that passes with a wide open border, deadly drugs like fentanyl are pouring into our country and killing our fellow Americans. President Biden’s border crisis extends far beyond the Southwest border triggering violence across all communities. To truly combat the threats it poses, we must attack it at every source.

“I am proud to join with colleagues, Senator Alex Padilla and Representative Jenniffer González-Colón, to introduce the Caribbean Border Counternarcotics Strategy Act, which is critical legislation to combat illegal narcotics operations, like the fentanyl trafficking, which are destroying lives in Florida, Puerto Rico and across the United States. American families, especially those who have lost loved ones to fentanyl and other deadly drugs deserve to know that the government is working on a plan to combat this crisis and hold traffickers accountable. I urge our colleagues in the House and Senate to do the same and support this commonsense bill.”

Senator Alex Padilla said, “Drug overdoses have reached an all-time high in the United States, and it is incumbent on Congress to find solutions to address this epidemic. Drug trafficking puts countless lives at risk, contributing to drug abuse and overdoses. Our bill would require the Office of National Drug Control Policy to publish a strategy to combat illicit drug trafficking in the Caribbean, which would save thousands of lives.”

Representative Jenniffer González-Colón said, “Drug trafficking in the Caribbean represents a major security threat to the United States. Nowhere is this risk more apparent than in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, where the illicit activities of drug smugglers operating in the region

fuel most of the violent crime we see in our streets and communities. That's why I've long advocated for the federal government to prioritize and allocate the necessary resources to address this threat.

"To ensure we have a comprehensive strategy in place to stop the flow of illegal drugs coming into our nation through the Caribbean, and tackle drug-related violent crime in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, I'm partnering with Senator Rick Scott to introduce the Caribbean Border Counternarcotics Strategy Act. This bipartisan and bicameral legislation would codify into law the requirement for the Office of National Drug Control Policy to issue a Caribbean Border Counternarcotics Strategy—just as Congress has previously codified in statute the requirement for both a Northern Border and a Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy."

Read the Caribbean Border Counternarcotics Strategy Act [here](#).

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