



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hearing Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

Understanding the Importance of DHS Preparedness Grants: Perspectives from the Field

January 9, 2020

These grants were created after the horrific events of September 11, 2001, and the Department of Homeland Security was tasked with administering them. The new homeland security grant programs, also commonly referred to as preparedness grants, were created to provide critical resources to help protect communities from threats. While states and localities have made great strides in their preparedness capabilities since 2001, the threats our country face continue to evolve and we must keep pace with them. After 2001, the country's focus was on combating terrorism from abroad, such as our enemies from Al Qaeda, to ensure another attack would never reach our homeland.

Cyber threats, which were an afterthought when DHS was first established, have moved to the forefront of threats we face every day—and one in which our ability to respond remains sorely lacking. Recent events have brought to the forefront the threats posed by Iran and its proxies. It is not only state and local governments who must be prepared to respond to acts of terror. Houses of worship and other nonprofits have increasingly seen themselves targeted for acts of violence. That is why I was proud to introduce H.R. 2476, the American Nonprofit Organizations Against Terrorism Act of 2019, which authorizes \$75 million annually through fiscal year 2024 for the Department of Homeland Security's Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP). The program provides grants to nonprofits and faith-based organizations to help secure their facilities against a potential terrorist attack. I am pleased the bill passed both the House and Senate this Congress and I hope that the President will sign it into law shortly. While authorizing the Nonprofit Security Grant Program is an important step, Congress must make sure that all the Homeland Security Grant Programs are properly funded to support our partners.

Unfortunately, President Trump's Fiscal Year 2018, 2019, and 2020 proposed budgets recommended cutting existing preparedness grant funding by nearly a billion and a half dollars in total. Though Congress has continually rebuked these proposed cuts, I am concerned the Administration will once again propose cuts for FY 2021. Such cuts would hinder jurisdictions from building and maintaining important capabilities communities rely on to keep America secure. Given recent events in Iran, other persistent foreign terrorist threats, and rising domestic terrorism, we must instead redouble our efforts to support state and local communities.

I look forward to hearing from stakeholders today on how preparedness grants have aided them as they make their communities safer, and how Congress can support their efforts against all forms of terrorism in our homeland.

#

Media contact: Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978