



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hearing Statement of Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Subcommittee Chairman Donald M. Payne, Jr. (D-NJ)

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

January 9, 2020

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks revealed gaps in the nation's emergency preparedness. DHS preparedness grants were established to address gaps by helping state, local, tribal, and territorial governments enhance their ability to prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate against terrorist attacks. As the representative for New Jersey's 10th Congressional District, I understand importance of these grants programs. My district contains Newark Liberty International Airport, the New Jersey Transit Authority, and the Port Newark-Elizabeth Marine Terminal. This in addition to having a dense area of industrial facilities and being in close proximity to New York City, the Newark-Jersey City area has consistently been considered one of the highest-risk urban areas in the nation and has been referred to as the most dangerous two miles in America.

Throughout my time in Congress, New Jersey's emergency preparedness has depended on financial assistance from DHS's preparedness grant programs. The Urban Area Security Initiative, commonly referred to as UASI has been particularly helpful with supporting my district's ability to build and maintain important capabilities necessary to make and keep us safe. At the same time, the funding has helped ensure that first responders have the resources they need to do their jobs effectively and safely. America's security depends on this important Federal investment, so I am disappointed in the President's regular efforts to slash preparedness grant funding. For example, President Trump proposed over \$900 million in cuts to DHS preparedness grant funding for Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019. The president's FY 2020 budget would have cut existing preparedness grant funding by nearly \$700 million. The threat landscape is ever evolving, and a lack of preparedness funding from the Federal government would make it that much more difficult for states to meet their homeland security needs.

Today, America is at an elevated risk of terrorist attack following the killing of Iranian general Qassem Soleimani by U.S. forces in Iraq. And because Iran has promised revenge, jurisdictions like mine are on heightened alert and have to be more vigilant. We are also reminded of homeland security needs by events like the Jersey City shooting at a Jewish grocery store last month that claimed the lives of four victims, including a police officer. The loss of one life is too many, and I can only imagine how this tragedy would have unfolded if Jersey City was not armed with the capabilities they were able to build with DHS preparedness grant funding. This instance mounted on top of the near dozen anti-Semitic acts that occurred in the past month in New York more than evidence the problems we have with domestic terrorism in this country, and underscore the threat against religious communities. In light of this, I am proud to have supported Chairman Thompson's efforts to secure funding to protect nonprofit organizations at risk of terrorist attacks, through his legislation, the "Securing American Nonprofit Organizations Against Terrorism Act of 2019," which passed in the House and Senate this Congress. DHS preparedness grants have proved to be an invaluable investment in America's security, and I am pleased that this Committee has consistently supported and encouraged robust funding for these grant programs.

I look forward to hearing from the witnesses on how they use DHS grant funding to secure their communities and whether any improvements can be made to these grant programs in order to enhance homeland security.

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