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

Ensuring Effective and Efficient Operations: A Review of the Fiscal Year 2020 DHS Management Directorate Budget Request

April 3, 2019

It was just announced that one of the witnesses, Mr. Fulghum, will be leaving the Department soon. Mr. Fulghum, I thank you for your extraordinary service to DHS over the past six and a half years, and I wish you the best in your future endeavors. I would be remiss however to not express my concern regarding what Mr. Fulghum's departure means for the direction of the Department. The Deputy Under Secretary for Management (USM) alongside of the USM, oversees all aspects of the Department's management programs, including financial, human capital, information technology, procurement, security, and asset management. The current USM, Ms. Claire Grady, is also performing the duties of the Department's number two official – the Deputy Secretary.

DHS has been without a Deputy Secretary for a year now – and no nominee has been named for the position. Without a Deputy Secretary and with a departing Deputy USM, I am genuinely concerned about the day-to-day management of the Department. These vacancies undoubtedly hamper the Department's ability to run effectively and efficiently. I urge the President to quickly nominate a Deputy Secretary and hope that someone as committed as Mr. Fulghum will soon be appointed to fill his shoes.

Turning to today's hearing, this is the first hearing the Committee is conducting to examine the Trump Administration's fiscal year 2020 budget request for the Department of Homeland Security. Before I highlight specifics of the Management Directorate's budget proposal, I must, once again, express my frustration with the Department's failure to deliver the Quadrennial Homeland Security Review – or the QHSR. The QHSR is a statutorily required, comprehensive examination of the homeland security strategy of the United States. The last time the Department produced a QHSR was in June 2014, under the Obama Administration. Under statute, the Department was to produce a new QHSR by December 2017. More than 15 months later – and 5 years since the last QHSR – the Trump Administration has yet to supply Congress with its vision and priorities for the Department.

In response to a question for the record, submitted after a Full Committee hearing on the President's FY 2019 budget request, DHS stated that it "recognizes the critical role the QHSR plays in shaping the functions and priorities for the Department," and that it "anticipates releasing the 2018 QHSR in early 2019 and will use the report to support the Department's future year budget planning efforts." Yet, we still do not have the QHSR. While the Management Directorate is not specifically responsible for drafting the QHSR, I am unsure what was used to formulate DHS' budget proposal in its absence. I sincerely hope that the QHSR is delivered before the Full Committee hearing on the overall Department budget request with Secretary Nielsen next month.

Turning to the Management Directorate's programmatic budget requests, I am pleased that many of the management and operational challenges that this Subcommittee has focused on for years would be funded in the President's proposal. For example, the request seeks \$5.6 million to launch a Cyber Talent Management System to enhance DHS' efforts to attract top cyber talent. The request also seeks \$224 million for the St. Elizabeths Headquarters Consolidation Project, which was intended to consolidate DHS operations, sustain a "One DHS" culture, and improve Department morale. Although I do have concerns regarding the St. Elizabeth project's continued cost overruns and schedule delays, I am hopeful that appropriate and consistent funding will help bring this project to fruition. On the topic of morale, for seven years in a row DHS has ranked last among large agencies on the list of Best Places to Work in the Federal Government.

Therefore, I fully expect that a decent portion of the \$126 million request for the Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer will be allocated toward improving morale among DHS' more than 240,000 dedicated employees. I recently reintroduced the "DHS MORALE Act" to require the development and implementation of policies related to leadership development, employee engagement, career progression, and other efforts to improve morale at DHS. I look forward to working with the Chief Human Capital Officer on other efforts to address this important issue. Lastly, I look forward to hearing how the Human Capital Office plans to use its allocation to increase diversity among the Department's workforce so that it will be more reflective of the public it serves.

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