



One Hundred Sixteenth Congress
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

May 2, 2019

The Honorable David Pekoske
Administrator
Transportation Security Administration
601 South 12th Street
Arlington, VA 20598-6001

Dear Administrator Pekoske:

Thank you for testifying before the Subcommittee on Transportation and Maritime Security on April 9th regarding the President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 budget request. We write concerning the statements you made regarding the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) workforce.

TSA cannot secure the Nation's transportation systems effectively without a well-trained and experienced frontline workforce. Unfortunately, TSA has struggled to recruit, train, and retain the skilled cadre of Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) needed to meet its mission. In a March 2019 report, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of the Inspector General (OIG) stated, "During FYs 2016-17, TSA hired more than 19,300 TSOs, yet lost more than 15,500 during this same period. TSA spends millions annually to hire and train new TSOs to replace those who leave the agency."¹

TSA's attrition problem is driven in part by employee dissatisfaction with pay, benefits, and rights. In 2018, according to employee surveys, TSA ranked dead last out of 410 Federal agency subcomponents on employee pay satisfaction.² The government shutdown earlier this year made clear that many TSOs live paycheck to paycheck, and TSOs do not enjoy standard workplace benefits and rights afforded to most other Federal workers. Limited pay, benefits, and rights contribute to a level of attrition that not only wastes resources but affects security, as a constantly changing workforce cannot develop the experience needed to operate effectively. Attrition poses a security risk, and TSA must address it as a top priority.

Given TSA's workforce retention challenges, we were surprised and concerned by your refusal to commit at the hearing to continuing to allow collective bargaining past December 2019. Collective

¹ Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General, "TSA Needs to Improve Efforts to Retain, Hire, and Train Its Transportation Security Officers," *OIG-19-35* (March 28, 2019), <https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2019-04/OIG-19-35-Mar19.pdf>.

² Partnership for Public Service, "Rankings by Category: Pay," *Best Places to Work in the Federal Government* (Accessed April 24, 2019), https://bestplacetowork.org/rankings/categories/sub/paybenefits_18.

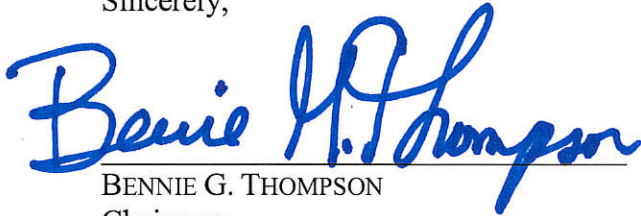
bargaining provides an important avenue to addressing systemic workforce issues like those identified by the DHS OIG and employee surveys. Continuing to allow collective bargaining is critical to improving retention.

In response to a request at the hearing for your commitment to work with the labor organization representing the workforce to develop a new collective bargaining agreement, you highlighted the existence of a national advisory council comprised of TSOs and the presence of TSOs on your direct staff as evidence of your communication with the workforce. Such efforts are no substitute for formal collective bargaining.

We urge you to continue allowing collective bargaining at TSA and to meet with Committee Members to discuss these issues as soon as possible and no later than May 17th.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



BENNIE G. THOMPSON
Chairman



J. LUIS CORREA
Chairman
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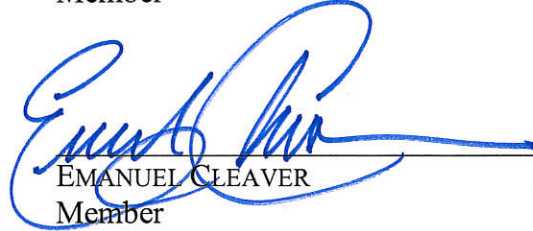
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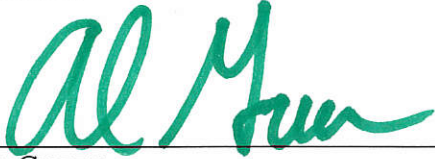
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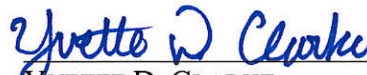
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