



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

State and Local Cybersecurity: Escalating Threats, Federal Partnership, and the Resilience of America's Communities

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Today's hearing is an opportunity to discuss a pressing national security issue—the cybersecurity of our state and local governments. I appreciate this subcommittee's longstanding bipartisan commitment to recognizing that we cannot leave state and local governments to fend for themselves against nation-state actors and transnational criminal gangs.

Five years ago, I was proud to cosponsor the State and Local Cybersecurity Improvement Act, legislation authored by then-subcommittee chairwoman Yvette Clarke that led to the creation of the State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program. This program has provided \$1 billion to state, local, tribal, and territorial governments to enhance their cyber defenses, helping secure critical infrastructure and protecting Americans' data. For Mississippi, that has meant over \$16 million in funding to assess local communities' cybersecurity capabilities and support improvements to address critical gaps.

Overwhelmingly, the feedback I've received regarding the program is that it has been incredibly beneficial for recipients and that long-term, sustained funding for the grant program is necessary to realize its full potential. Specifically, the program has played a valuable role in bringing state and local stakeholders together to work collaboratively on cybersecurity, acting in a coordinated way to address cyber risks strategically. Additionally, the program highlights the important role that the Department of Homeland Security can play when leveraging the varied expertise of its components.

By relying on CISA's cybersecurity expertise and FEMA's extensive experience with grants administration, the State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program has been able to provide benefits to state and local governments that each agency could not provide on their own. Unfortunately, the last notice of funding opportunity for the program went out last year, and there is no additional funding available unless Congress takes action to fund the program.

I am glad that our committee has done its job and passed a long-term authorization of the program through the House, but we need the Senate to do its job as well. I hope the Senate, the Administration, and our appropriator colleagues are watching this hearing today and learning about the importance of additional funding for state and local cybersecurity grants. While the grant program is important, it is not the only source of Federal support for state and local cybersecurity.

Historically, CISA funded the Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center and fielded a robust regional staff that could provide on the ground assistance to state and local governments. Unfortunately, the Trump administration's bizarre vendetta against CISA has resulted in the elimination of MS-ISAC funding and significant reduction in CISA staff both at its headquarters and throughout the country. These cuts are directly harming our national security and must be reversed.

Funding alone is not enough—state and local governments must be able to benefit from the expertise and information sharing that CISA alone is able to provide. I am glad that under Acting Director

Andersen's leadership, CISA is taking action to fill critical gaps in its personnel, including addressing vacant cybersecurity state coordinator positions. But, the weakening of CISA was an entirely avoidable error that will harm our country for years to come.

CISA's leadership must take bold actions to correct the Trump administration's earlier mistakes, including restoring the full support that state and local leaders need. Additionally, CISA must step up to play the important coordinator role that the country needs as rapid AI advances threaten the cyber defenses nationally, including at state and local governments.

I thank the witnesses for being here today and look forward to their testimony on the threats state and local governments face and how the Federal government can improve its support.

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