



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

Creating a More Resilient Nation: Stakeholder Perspectives

May 17, 2022

I would like to take a moment to reflect on the devastating violence across our nation this weekend. My condolences go out to the families of the victims in Buffalo, New York and Laguna Woods, California. These heinous acts of violence and domestic terrorism demonstrate the challenges we face as a nation.

I would like to thank Chairwoman Demings for holding today's hearing on resilience. Resilience means being ready and able to withstand a crisis and deliver a quick and successful response and recovery to an emergency. Resilience means that preparation and adaptation are not an afterthought. They are critical parts of the process. By planning for the worst and building resilience into our systems from the very beginning, we can mitigate damage and suffering.

Today, we are two weeks away from the start of hurricane season. Experts are predicting another record year, and if they are correct there could be 19 named storms. Over the last year alone, people across the Nation have experienced the impact of climate change in deadly heatwaves, dangerous wildfires, and storms, including tornadoes in Kentucky and widespread destruction from Hurricane Ida, which impacted states from the Gulf Coast to New England. Unfortunately, these problems are here to stay.

The threats before us are grave, and natural disasters are not the only challenge. The rise in homeland threats like domestic terrorism and cyber-attacks place an added burden on our first responders, local governments, and community partners. Emergency response systems are incredibly important to the outcome of a crisis, and yet they are already under strain.

The Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) helps ensure that local law enforcement and first responders have the training and equipment they need to protect against terrorist threats. I support full and robust funding for the UASI program and other DHS grants that ensure first responders have resources to keep our communities safe.

Another key pillar of a resilient nation is ensuring that everyone, not just those with means, is considered included in the disaster response, especially those who need it most. It is wrong to leave people behind. Sadly, that is what our current disaster assistance system does. Often those with wealth and power can navigate the Federal Emergency Management Agency's disaster assistance system, while low-income and people of color are left behind.

With Chairwoman Demings and Senator Elizabeth Warren's support, I introduced the "FEMA Equity Act" to ensure that no one gets left behind by FEMA assistance because of their race or income. I look forward to hearing from the witnesses about how integrating equity into our conversation is a critical part of resilience.

To cope with the challenges of tomorrow, we must act strategically to build resilience at all levels of government, from small-town leadership to our Federal climate goals. I look forward to the witnesses' testimony as we work towards building a more resilient nation.

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