



COMMITTEE *ON* HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

Finding 500,000: Addressing America's Cyber Workforce Gap

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As we see increased cyber threats from adversary nation-states and criminal gangs, continued investment in developing our cybersecurity talent pool will be essential to defending the Federal government and critical infrastructure.

This Committee has prioritized addressing the cyber workforce challenge for years and has passed important legislation to ensure that DHS and CISA continue to support cyber workforce development. Last Congress, for example, the Committee secured the enactment of Representative Swalwell's industrial control systems cybersecurity training legislation. Earlier this Congress, the Committee passed Representative Jackson Lee's legislation authorizing CISA's efforts to provide cybersecurity training to DHS employees. I hope we can work together to secure passage of Representative Jackson Lee's important bill by the full House this Congress.

While these legislative efforts have been helpful, we know that more must be done. Fortunately, the Biden Administration has released a comprehensive cyber workforce and education strategy that sets a roadmap for how the Executive Branch and Congress can better support workforce development efforts. Considering the wide range of Federal agencies, State and local governments, and private entities involved in cyber workforce training and education, this kind of leadership from the White House is critical to ensuring we have a coordinated, whole-of-government, and whole-of-nation effort.

I am glad to see the Administration's new report on the workforce strategy's implementation and look forward to hearing more today about how implementation is going and how Congress can support this critical effort. In particular, I support the Administration's commitment to skills-based hiring and efforts like DHS's cyber internship program.

I look forward to working with DHS and my colleagues to authorize the cyber internship program – available to individuals from high school through grad school - to ensure the Department continues to develop the next generation of cyber talent. I appreciate that the Federal government has some unique challenges in recruiting and retaining top cyber talent. When the Federal government must compete with a private sector that offers higher pay and more flexible hiring, we know the Federal government risks losing out on skilled cybersecurity practitioners.

I look forward to hearing from the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security today on how they are addressing this challenge. I also hope to hear about what authorities Congress can provide to ensure the Federal departments and agencies responsible for leading our cyber defense have the talent necessary to keep our Nation secure.

As we consider efforts to address our cyber workforce gap going forward, there are some key points that we must keep in mind. First, one key advantage we have over our adversaries is our diverse population. To fill cyber workforce positions, we must focus on outreach to women, people of color,

rural populations, and others who are not adequately represented in our current cyber workforce. We simply cannot address the cyber workforce shortage without including everyone, and doing so requires an intentional effort on the part of the government and the private sector.

That is why I authored legislation to establish the DHS Intelligence and Cybersecurity Diversity Fellowship Program, and I am proud of the diverse young people who have participated. We must continue to build and expand on similar efforts to bring more people from all walks of life into the Federal government's cyber workforce.

Additionally, we have seen rapid technological advances in recent years with the growth of artificial intelligence, showing how the skills necessary for cybersecurity are constantly evolving. We must ensure that our cybersecurity training efforts reflect the latest skills and that our cybersecurity workforce continues to receive adequate training throughout their careers. AI will not solve our cyber workforce shortage, but it will change how cyber defenders do their jobs, so education and training programs must reflect that reality.

Keeping these considerations in mind, I hope that our committee can work together in a bipartisan way to expand and strengthen our cyber talent pool. Our witnesses' expertise will help inform our efforts, and I look forward to their testimony.

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