



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

**Markup of: H.R. 1540, H.R. 6387, H.R. 6824, H.R. 6825, H.R. 6826, H.R. 6827, H.R. 6837, H.R. 6856, H.R. 6861, H.R. 6868, H.R. 6871, AND H.R. 6873**

**March 2, 2022**

At the outset, I would like to express solidarity with the people of Ukraine and commend the Biden Administration for bringing democracies together in Europe and beyond to hold Vladimir Putin accountable for forcefully invading Russia's democratic neighbor.

We do not need to wait on history to put this attack in context.

We know today that Putin's goals extend beyond gaining territory. He's determined to strike at the heart of democracy and this time—unlike in the past, when he hid behind GRU cyber hackers or FSB assassins—he's doing it out in the open.

As the Chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security, it is not lost on me that the ramifications of Russia's invasion of Ukraine are already being felt here—in our homeland.

I stand ready to support the Biden Administration and our allies in standing up for democracy and holding Vladimir Putin to account.

Turning to today's agenda, we have twelve measures that seek to improve DHS' capacity to address transportation security, cybersecurity, and bomb detection and to improve acquisitions and DHS partnership with non-profits at risk of terrorism.

I support them all and would note that there is bipartisan agreement on just about all of them. I am particularly pleased that we are considering a bill I recently introduced with the Ranking Member and a number of my Committee colleagues—H.R. 6825, the "Nonprofit Security Grant Program Improvement Act of 2022."

My legislation and the "amendment in the nature of a substitute" before us today will strengthen the Non-profit Security Grant Program by authorizing funding at \$500 million—a historic level that is responsive to the dynamic terrorism threat landscape facing nonprofits, including houses of worship and Historically Black Colleges and Universities and directing FEMA to take a range of actions to improve the administration, management, and oversight of the program and to improve outreach, engagement, education, and technical assistance, particularly to nonprofits in underserved communities.

This critical grant program helps bolster security for at risk nonprofits in urban and rural communities and, in January, got national attention when Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker, the heroic rabbi who brought a terrorist hostage standoff to a peaceful resolution, credited the program as being a major factor in his preparedness.

I thank the Jewish Federations of North America, ADL, Sikh Coalition, Secure Community Network, Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, and the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A, Inc., for supporting the bill.

Without objection, I include in the record letters of support from the Jewish Federations of North America, Secure Community Network, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, and the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A, Inc.

I am also pleased that we are considering legislation authored by Congressman Pete Aguilar.

His bill seeks to improve Congress' ability to respond to investigative findings of the FBI, DOJ, and DHS after a terrorist incident. I have an "amendment in the nature of a substitute" that updates the bill to improve the quality of the information provided to Congress.

Finally, I would note that I am glad that we are considering timely and common-sense legislation authored by the Chair of the Transportation and Maritime Security Subcommittee, Congresswoman Watson Coleman, to address the explosive growth in the number of firearms that TSA is detecting at passenger checkpoints.

For years, TSA has been sounding alarm bells about the increase in firearms detected at checkpoints. As an avid sportsman and someone who flies frequently, I am troubled to see so many fellow gunowners show up at TSA checkpoints with firearms in their carry-on bags.

Last November, an incident in which a gun was discharged at Atlanta's international airport drove home the potential dangers involved.

I commend Congresswoman Watson Coleman for developing a targeted, sensible bill to help gun owners follow the law and make aviation safer and more secure.

On the subject of aviation security, I would note that I am also gravely concerned about the number of in-flight incidents involving violent and unruly passengers.

In response, the Committee is working with TSA and others on legislation to better position flight crews to defend themselves and their passengers against such security threats.

I am hopeful that the next time we come together in a markup, we will be considering legislation to require TSA to expand advanced self-defense training for flight crews.

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