



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

Reviewing DHS's Targeted Violence and Terrorism Grant Program

June 14, 2022

We are here today to discuss the Department of Homeland Security's Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP) grant program. Although still relatively new, this grant program has become a key part of the Department's strategy to address a rise in violent domestic extremism incidents. Community spaces we all once considered safe—schools, churches, grocery stores—have been repeatedly struck by horrific and tragic violence in recent years. These attacks leave deep and lasting scars on our communities, and our government must do everything in its power to put a stop to this violence.

Over the last decade, the Department of Homeland Security has tracked the rising number of fatal domestic violent extremism attacks. Perpetrators of these violent acts are often lone wolves and DHS has found that there is no common motivating factor that unites them all, making these attacks difficult to predict and prevent. In response to these challenges, DHS has sought to support local programs to prevent individuals from committing a violent act regardless of the motivating ideology.

Through the TVTP grant program, the Department directly funds State, local, tribal, and territorial governments, nonprofits, and institutions of higher education to help create or enhance violence prevention networks. Known as local prevention frameworks, these networks facilitate connections between community leaders to increase awareness about the domestic violent extremism threat and provide support services for vulnerable individuals who may be on the path toward radicalizing to violence. These support services can take many forms, from youth-resilience programs to media literacy and critical thinking initiatives aimed at combating the pervasive appeal of disinformation. The goal is to reach people who may have started down the wrong path but have not yet committed a crime.

Identifying and working with these individuals is not something that local law enforcement always has the capacity or authority to do. That is why DHS has identified the need to support a whole-of-society approach to violence prevention, with the goal of equipping faith leaders, schoolteachers, and other community members with the tools needed to provide meaningful support. Yet just as importantly, these programs must ensure that the protections for privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties that all Americans enjoy are not swept aside in the name of prevention.

We must be aware of the limitations inherent in the goal of preventing a crime before it happens. The DHS Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties has worked closely with the Department's Center for Prevention Partnerships and Programs, to ensure that both DHS and the projects it funds are protecting already vulnerable individuals and communities. But continued oversight from this Committee and others will be necessary.

I look forward to the completion of the Department's independent review into the efficacy of these grant programs, and I am pleased we have the opportunity today to delve more deeply into how some of these projects have been designed and implemented. It is my hope that DHS will stand as a leader in the fight against domestic violent extremism and provide a light for local communities during their darkest hours.

#

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