



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

An Examination of the Transportation Security Administration's Fiscal Year 2025 Budget

May 15, 2024

I want to thank Administrator Pekoske for joining us to discuss TSA's budget request for fiscal year 2025. Last year, TSA faced a major funding shortfall, as the agency sought more than a \$1 billion increase to pay for salary raises and expanded collective bargaining rights. I strongly supported that effort, and I was glad that we in Congress were able to fulfill TSA's request and fund critical improvements for the workforce.

For FY 2025, to continue these workforce initiatives, TSA has requested a \$377 million increase for periodic pay raises and career ladder promotions, which will keep TSA employees in line with other Federal workers. It is critical that Congress continues its support for TSA's new pay system, which is having a significant, positive impact.

Pay raises are making an enormous difference in the lives of Transportation Security Officers, Federal Air Marshals, and other TSA employees across the country. They are also helping TSA address high rates of attrition, which have plagued the agency for years and have now fallen nearly in half.

Tomorrow, TSA and the union representing the TSO workforce, the American Federation of Government Employees, will formalize a new collective bargaining agreement that will provide additional benefits for the agency and its workforce. I look forward to hearing more from the Administrator about the impact these workforce initiatives are having on TSA's ability to carry out its security mission.

I also hope to hear more about the difficult choices TSA has made to determine funding priorities. TSA's budget request does not include funding for the Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response, or "VIPR" program, which is critical to surface transportation security. The request also does not include funding for law enforcement officer and canine reimbursement programs which airports rely on to help with security costs.

In addition, the request includes approximately \$90 million for Computed Tomography carry-on baggage screening machines, representing an increase from FY 2024 funding, but still not enough to allow the program to deploy machines to all screening checkpoints on a reasonable timeline. I hope that Congress will be able to restore and increase funding for these programs. Doing so will require creative solutions.

As it stands, TSA's budget request assumes that Congress will be able to redirect to TSA \$1.6 billion in passenger security fee collections which are slated for diversion to the General Treasury. In FY 2024, Congress returned \$800 million in fees, but doing so required an extension of sequestration cuts to mandatory spending programs in FY 2032. Returning twice the fees in FY 2025 will require twice as large an offset.

To go beyond TSA's budget request and restore funding to key programs, Congress should also consider a modest increase to passenger security fees. I am proud to cosponsor Ranking Member Thompson's bill, the "Fund the TSA Act," which would end the diversion of passenger security fees and raise fees by

\$2 per trip to provide TSA with the resources it desperately needs. I encourage my colleagues to give the bill serious consideration as a solution to TSA's funding challenges.

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