



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

The State of the Transportation Security Administration

May 26, 2022

After the challenges faced by the Transportation Security Administration during the COVID-19 pandemic, I am thankful that the Administration is taking concrete steps to provide TSA workers with improved workplace rights and a desperately needed increase in pay.

I am committed to working with our colleagues on the Appropriations Committee to fully fund President Biden's budget request of \$870.9 million to increase TSO compensation and benefits and \$121.2 million to expand collective bargaining rights and provide Merit Systems Protection Board appeal rights. But we know those actions alone will not be enough. We must fully enact H.R. 903, the *Rights for the Transportation Security Administration Workforce Act*, to ensure improvements for the workforce are codified in law.

I would like to thank Administrator Pekoske for his support for H.R. 903 and ask that he continue to push for its passage in the Senate and enactment into law. We have come a long way in advancing these initiatives, and I am extremely hopeful about the direction in which the agency is moving. However, I must express my frustration that TSA has not made more progress in some other areas.

For example, despite years of promises to expand opportunities for small and minority-owned businesses, TSA has continued to rely on a handful of large companies to provide screening technologies, limiting competition and stagnating innovation.

Minority-owned and small businesses are able to provide more than just service contracts but given the high barriers to entry in this space, they need a helping hand from TSA to ensure they are not left behind. I hope Administrator Pekoske will commit to working with our Committee to develop more meaningful opportunities for small and minority-owned businesses to participate in screening technology procurement programs.

On the topic of technology, I must also note that the funding level for Computed Tomography machines proposed in TSA's budget request is woefully inadequate to procure and deploy these machines at the speed necessary to counter current threats. Additionally, I am eager to hear the status of TSA's new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer position, as well as any actions taken or planned to implement recommendations from TSA's Inclusion Action Committee.

Despite employing a majority-minority workforce, there is a staggering lack of diversity among TSA's leadership at the regional and national levels. It is well past time to see some change on this issue, and I hope the coming months and years will demonstrate TSA's commitment to advancing the leadership of Americans from diverse backgrounds. I look forward to hearing from Administrator Pekoske about TSA's plans for the coming fiscal year and beyond and how Congress can best support improvements to the agency.

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