



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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

***Building a Diverse and Inclusive Workforce to Meet the Homeland Security Mission***

**February 27, 2020**

The last time the Committee held a hearing on diversity and inclusivity at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was over a decade ago, when Democrats were last in the Majority. While representation of minorities, women, and people with disabilities has increased, I remain concerned about the Department's failure to develop an inclusive workforce. The homeland is best served by a workforce that is representative of our great country.

Yet, DHS data shows--

- Women make up only 35 percent of the Department's workforce
- People with disabilities make up a mere 11 percent and are leaving the Department at higher than expected rates
- Minorities hold only 22 percent of the Department's most senior leadership positions.

Moreover, a closer look at the data shows that the diversity that does exist at DHS is concentrated in just a few of its components. Building an inclusive workforce is not just about ensuring the numbers look good. It is about better serving the American people by considering the wide variety of challenges facing different communities.

In short, it is about building a Department of Homeland Security that is focused on protecting all of America. That is why it is crucial that the Department promote and advance a workforce to meet those challenges.

It's simply not enough to hire diverse candidates at lower pay grades. Those populations must have leadership opportunities as well. Currently, leadership positions at DHS are still predominantly filled by white men, even in components that have a diverse workforce overall. The Transportation Security Administration, for example, has a workforce comprised of 55 percent racial minorities, yet only 21 percent of senior leadership positions are filled by minorities.

A lack of diverse leadership can have a direct, adverse effect on hiring, retention and promotion of diverse candidates. A key step toward resolving this issue is ensuring the entire Department is committed to identifying barriers to employment equality and implementing plans to address those barriers.

The Department must work toward better addressing the challenges it faces in creating a more equitable employment environment and thereby a stronger DHS. I hope to hear from Chief Human Capital Officer Bailey about the efforts the Department is undertaking to recruit more diverse candidates and retain those employees once hired.

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