



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Hearing Statement of Emergency Preparedness, Response, & Recovery Subcommittee Chairwoman Val Demings (D-FL)

### *State and Local Perspectives on DHS Preparedness Grant Programs*

April 28, 2021

We are here today to discuss the Department of Homeland Security's preparedness grant programs. These grant programs were created following one of the nation's darkest moments, the September 11th terrorist attacks.

Through the Homeland Security Grant Program, the Department's premier grants suite, DHS has made important investments to elevate the nation's homeland security posture. These programs provide Federal assistance to fill gaps related to state, local, tribal, and territorial governments' ability to effectively prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate against terrorist attacks. This is especially so with the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) Program and the State Homeland Security Grant Program, the DHS programs states rely on to build and maintain critical capabilities used to make and keep this country safe.

UASI funding is particularly critical to the Congressional district I represent, Florida's 10th. With Orlando being home to many international tourist destinations, including world renown theme parks and attractions, it is essential that our first responders be adequately equipped. Presently, Orlando's security strong posture is due in large part to UASI funding that has helped to provide first responders with the tools and training they need to do their jobs safely and effectively.

Having served as a law enforcement officer for 27 years, I understand the tough job of first responders, and believe in the importance of continued, robust Federal support for grant programs that assist them in their work. President Trump consistently proposed significant cuts to the DHS preparedness grant programs that, if enacted, would have resulted in the tremendous loss of important homeland security capabilities that this country has invested in for years. Thankfully, Congress worked to ensure that cuts to these programs did not take place, but rather enacted increases to these programs.

I look forward to working with the Biden Administration to ensure that DHS preparedness grant programs continue to maintain robust funding and are responsive to all threats facing this nation.

In the nearly 20 years since the September 11th terrorist attacks, the threat environment in this country has evolved, and the risks we now face are different from when the preparedness grant programs were first established. Rather than foreign radical extremism being the predominant threat, it is now domestic terrorism— a fact evidenced by the January 6 insurrection at the United States Capitol.

Unfortunately, this rise in domestic terrorism has also put nonprofit organizations at great risk, prompting them to struggle to secure their facilities with extremely tight budgets and underscoring the need for them to have access to DHS funding.

I would like to commend Chairman Thompson on the good work he has done to help secure nonprofit organizations from terrorist attacks through the Securing American Nonprofit Organizations Against

Terrorism Act, which is now law. While the evolution of the threat landscape requires DHS preparedness grant programs to evolve with it, it is important that stakeholder perspectives are considered and incorporated into changes to the grant programs, including changes DHS made in FY 2020 and FY 2021.

I am pleased that the Department has an interest in ensuring preparedness grant dollars are spent how and where they are needed most, and that Secretary Mayorkas has acknowledged the need to assess how these grant programs could be improved. While I look forward to working with the Biden Administration to improve the grant programs, it is also the role of this Subcommittee, through its oversight function, to ensure they are getting it right. I am pleased that we have assembled this expert panel of stakeholders to assist us in that effort.

I look forward to engaging with you today on how DHS preparedness grant programs are used to strengthen your communities, the recent changes made to the programs in FY 2020 and FY 2021, and the future of the grant programs.

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