



COMMITTEE *ON* HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hearing Statement of Transportation & Maritime Security Subcommittee Ranking Member Shri Thanedar (D-MI)

An Examination of TSA's FY 2024 Budget and Priorities

June 22, 2023

We stand at a critical junction for the Transportation Security Administration as we in Congress consider whether to invest the resources necessary to ensure the continued security of our transportation systems.

Last December, Democrats in Congress provided significant resources in the Omnibus funding bill to increase pay and collective bargaining rights for TSA workers, finally putting them on equal footing with other Federal employees. Increased pay will begin to hit TSA employees' paychecks next month, and TSA is already seeing major, positive impacts.

Drastically more people are applying to TSA positions, and trends indicate that TSA's attrition rates—which have been unsustainably high—may drop as much as 50% under the new pay structure. Lower attrition will not only allow the agency to save millions on hiring and training employees who leave months later, but will also improve security as TSA develops a highly skilled, experienced workforce. Going forward, we must provide TSA with the funding to continue these critical workforce initiatives for a full year in 2024.

Yesterday, the House Appropriations Committee marked up the bill put forward by the Republican Majority to fund the Department of Homeland Security for 2024. I was glad to see that Republicans are now following Democrats' lead to provide pay increases for Transportation Security Officers, or TSOs. Unfortunately, the bill prohibits increased pay for any TSA employee who is not a TSO. This group of employees is critical to TSA's security mission and includes Federal Air Marshals, canine handlers, bomb technicians, cybersecurity experts, and intelligence analysts.

The bill also defunds Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response teams, which are essential to securing mass transit and other transportation modes, and it defunds basic collective bargaining rights for TSA employees. Simply put, this Republican bill would seriously undermine TSA's security mission.

Thankfully, an alternative approach exists.

Last month, Ranking Member Thompson introduced 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. This bill would allow TSA to invest in its workforce, process increasing numbers of travelers, purchase additional Computed Tomography machines for screening carry-on baggage, and fund critical airport law enforcement and canine programs. I am a proud cosponsor of this bill, and I encourage my Republican colleagues to give it serious consideration as a solution to TSA's funding challenges.

The fact is, we have been underfunding TSA for two decades. It is time that we right-size TSA's budget, support its workforce, and set the agency up to address rising passenger volumes over the coming years. Mr. Administrator, I look forward to hearing your thoughts on how Congress can support the agency's needs.

#

Media contact: Adam Comis at 202-225-9978