FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hearing Statement of Transportation & Maritime Security Subcommittee

Ranking Member Shri Thanedar (D-MI)

The Role of Technology in Aviation Security

October 19, 2023

The Transportation Security Administration carries out a critical mission to secure transportation systems. To do so, TSA relies on a well-trained workforce and sophisticated technologies capable of detecting the latest threats. Thanks to funding Democrats provided in last year's Omnibus spending bill, a few months ago TSA workers finally began to receive long-overdue pay raises to put them on par with other Federal workers.

To build on this progress, we must provide additional funding to not only preserve those pay raises for this fiscal year, but to empower TSA workers with next-generation technologies that will maximize TSA's detection capabilities. Technologies such as Computed Tomography machines and Credential Authentication Technology machines provide significant enhancements to security while also improving the passenger experience.

I would like to see Congress provide sustained funding for checkpoint security technologies—which is why I am a cosponsor of Ranking Member Thompson's bill, the *Fund the TSA Act*, which would direct a modest increase to passenger security fees to provide consistent funding for checkpoint technologies, TSA workforce initiatives, and other transportation security programs. As TSA deploys technologies to airports, it must also make sure to provide equitable treatment to all passengers.

Last year, the Government Accountability Office issued a report finding that TSA has not assessed the extent to which its policies and technology result in certain passengers being referred for additional screening more often than others. For too long, some passenger populations have been disproportionately subjected to invasive pat-downs due to alarms from screening technology. These populations include transgender passengers, passengers with religious headwear, passengers with disabilities, and passengers with coarse hair, including African American women.

Under the Biden Administration, TSA has made impressive progress in addressing these issues by deploying an upgraded algorithm that reduces false alarms by 50%. TSA must build on this progress and protect against discriminatory outcomes in emerging technologies.

Finally, we must ensure TSA fosters innovation in its technology programs by encouraging the participation of a wide range of vendors, including small and minority-owned businesses. Many small businesses have struggled to compete for TSA technology awards given the long timelines necessary for technology development, testing, and evaluation. We must support small businesses since they are some of the biggest drivers of innovation and progress.

\# \# \#

Media contact: Adam Comis at 202-225-9978