



COMMITTEE *ON* HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

The Future of FAMS: Evaluating the Federal Air Marshal Mission

September 24, 2024

Originally established in 1961 and expanded exponentially the wake of 9/11, today the Federal Air Marshal Service employs several thousand FAMS who fly armed on domestic and international flights. Every day, FAMS protect commercial flights against hijackings, explosive attacks, and other terrorist threats.

I want to express my gratitude to the air marshals who work long hours under difficult conditions to help keep the flying public secure. We may not be able to thank each of them personally, but their service and sacrifice – and that of their families – is truly appreciated.

I am proud to have championed the effort to boost pay for all TSA employees, including FAMS, to put them on the same footing as their peers at other Federal agencies. While increasing pay is a critical part of the effort to support the TSA workforce, more remains to be done to support FAMS.

I hope this hearing will help Congress address longstanding challenges and the need for further reform at the agency. I am particularly focused on supporting the health and wellbeing of FAMS, who have long expressed health concerns as a result of their demanding duties and schedules.

In 2012, a study by Harvard Medical School on reportedly found that 75% of FAMS were sleep-deficient when flying domestic missions and 84% when flying international missions.

In 2020, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported that FAMS in every office GAO visited stated that health issues were a key quality of life concern. Tragically, TSA has lost 16 FAMS to suicide since 2002.

Last year, the Committee on Homeland Security approved my bill, H.R. 2577, the DHS Suicide Prevention and Resiliency for Law Enforcement Act, which would help address suicides and mental health among DHS law enforcement, including FAMS. I look forward to reaching an agreement with the Senate on the bill so it can go to the president to be signed into law.

I hope our witnesses will share their thoughts today about what more TSA can do to support FAMS and what Congress can do to support those who are on the frontlines securing the homeland

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