

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****The WMD Prevention and Preparedness Act of 2011***

June 23, 2011 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Protection, and Security Technologies subcommittee and Emergency Preparedness, Response and Communications subcommittee joint hearing on the “WMD Prevention and Preparedness Act of 2011”:

“The Commission on the Prevention of WMD Proliferation and Terrorism - “the WMD Commission” – produced a report entitled “World at Risk” in 2008. In that report, they told us that they believed that a terrorist attack would occur somewhere in the world by 2013, and that it was more likely to be an act of biological terrorism.

Further, during the 111th Congress, this Committee heard testimony from Senators Bob Graham and Jim Talent, then the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Commission. They testified that the government’s progress toward implementing their 13 recommendations was slow and went as far as giving it a grade of “F” in these two areas: “failure to enhance the nation’s capabilities for rapid response to prevent biological attacks from inflicting mass casualties” and for a lack of progress on reforming congressional oversight “to better address intelligence, homeland security, and crosscutting 21st-century national security missions.”

In a bipartisan response last fall, this Committee voted favorably to report H.R. 5498- the “WMD Prevention and Preparedness Act of 2010” to the House. H.R. 5498 was a comprehensive bill that addressed the major actions recommended by the WMD Commission. The bill included a range of provisions related to prevention, deterrence, detection, preparedness, response, and recovery.

As a nation, we have been fortunate that a WMD attack has not come to fruition in the United States. But we must move forward with closing the coordination and resource gaps identified by the WMD Commission. Today, I am glad to report that this Committee is once again working in a bipartisan fashion in order to enhance the government’s capability to counter the pressing WMD threat.

This bill will reintroduce many of H.R. 5498 major initiatives related to homeland security, intelligence, public health, and foreign affairs matters. Therefore, I look forward to working with Mr. Pascrell, Mr. King and our Members to once again push this legislation through the Committee.

As we move closer to the 10th anniversary of 9/11, we are reminded of the consequences of fragmented security policies and inadequate resources.

This bill provides a framework for biodefense that is inclusive and recognizes the important role of first responders. A potential WMD attack requires that we refashion policy and ensure that our first responders have the resources needed to be effective.

Investments in emergency communications, planning, and response equipment saves lives. The first responder grant programs importance to WMD preparedness should not be understated and must be provided at adequate levels.

I hope our conversation today provides an opportunity to understand the role and needs of first responders related to WMD preparedness. This bill ensures first responders have the committed and collaborative federal partner needed to address the unique issues of a potential WMD attack.”

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