

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Assessing the Nation's State of Preparedness: A Federal, State, and Local Perspective***

September 19, 2013 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Emergency Preparedness, Response and Communications subcommittee hearing entitled “Assessing the Nation’s State of Preparedness: A Federal, State, and Local Perspective”:

“For almost a decade, I have worked to improve disaster preparedness and planning for children and those with special needs and language barriers. I am pleased to work with Ranking Member Payne, Jr., to advance these efforts.

The 2013 National Preparedness Report indicates that we have made progress in building cybersecurity capabilities. I am encouraged that we are moving forward but I am not convinced that anyone believes we have done all we can to ensure that this nation’s cyber networks are protected and resilient.

I look forward to continuing the progress on the cyber front. I also urge the leadership of this House to become actively engaged in putting legislation on the House floor that will help us protect the known vulnerabilities in the cyber network that runs every aspect of this nation’s critical infrastructure.

As we look at the many things that need to be done, we need to mention the continuing need to provide interim and long-term housing solutions following catastrophic disasters. We learned after Hurricane Katrina that we were ill-prepared and ill-equipped to provide interim and long-term housing to large numbers of disasters survivors.

I was troubled to learn that 500 people remained in shelters a month after Hurricane Sandy. Eight years after Hurricane Katrina, we should have at least learned how to address housing needs.

Finally, this Congress needs to consider the effect of uncertain funding has on the development of preparedness and response capabilities on the local level. During our full committee hearing on the Boston Marathon Bombing, the Boston Chief of Police made it clear that the effectiveness of their response effort was made possible by the federal homeland security grants they had received.

As this Congress continues attempts to reduce funding for preparedness programs, we need to understand that these reductions have a direct effect on the ability of first responders to save lives during times of disaster and tragedy. To call this approach short-sighted is to give it too much credit. It is not sighted at all. And as it says in Proverbs—where there is no vision, the people perish.

Madame Chair, I raise these three issues—grant funding, housing and cyber security, because I know that we can solve each of them with great benefit to this nation. I urge you to join us in our efforts to resolve these problems.”

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