

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Donald M. Payne, Jr.

“Mass Gathering Security: A Look at the Coordinated Approach to Super Bowl XLVIII in New Jersey and Other Large Scale Events”

Field Hearing at the New Jersey Institute of Technology

Monday, June 23, 2014 at 10:00 a.m.

I am happy that the Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications has the opportunity to come to the Tenth Congressional District of New Jersey to learn about the unique challenges the State faced in preparing for the Super Bowl. I think this is a good opportunity to also learn about how the Federal, State, and local governments and the private sector worked together to address the challenges in preparing for a major national event.

States and cities across the United States can learn much from the unprecedented preparedness efforts carried out by first responders from Newark, to Jersey City, to Rutherford and across the State. And I am grateful for the opportunity to share its story. Finally, I would like to thank the New Jersey Institute of Technology for hosting this hearing in such a beautiful space. NJIT is home of the Homeland Security Technology Systems Center and the Homeland Security and Emergency Management Program. These impressive programs make important contributions to our ability to identify and address vulnerabilities to National and State security and the development of well-trained, highly-skilled emergency management personnel.

Before 9/11, the focus of security professionals at our nation’s sporting arenas and other venues for mass gatherings focused primarily on crowd containment and firearm entry prevention. After 9/11, these spaces – with significant crowd capacity and media presence – became prime targets for terrorist activity.

Preventing, preparing for, and responding to a terrorist attack or other disaster at a sporting event requires close coordination between Federal, State, and local authorities. Venue owners, sporting associations, and event promoters have worked together with Federal, State, and local law enforcement and emergency managers to develop, implement, and exercise plans to counter the evolving threats posed.

The National Football League (NFL) has the highest game attendance of any domestic professional sports league in the world, drawing over 68,400 spectators per game for its most recently completed season in 2013. Its largest widely-attended event is the Super Bowl, which had an attendance of more than 82,000 spectators at MetLife Stadium on February 2, 2014. And it is a testament to the coordinated efforts that such a massive event occurred without incident. The success of the February 2, 2014, Super Bowl is a credit to over a decade’s worth of building preparedness and response capabilities at the local and State level with Homeland Security Grant investments and a year-and-a-half of coordination, planning, and exercise among Federal, State, and local law enforcement and first responders alongside the private sector.

In November 2013, I led a New Jersey delegation-briefing to learn about Federal security preparations. Two months later, I participated in a site visit at MetLife Stadium during which Lt. Col. Cetnar described

the State Police's coordinated security efforts – with entities ranging from the Federal government, to the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey to local governments throughout the region.

At each of these briefings, I was impressed by the degree of planning and coordination across all levels of government and jurisdictions. By the time the Super Bowl arrived, I was very confident in the preparations that had taken place, and I commend the Federal and State law enforcement on their success. I would also like to congratulate the NFL and MetLife Stadium on their work to enhance security efforts prior to the Super Bowl.

I am pleased that, in addition to learning about advances in mass gathering security here in New Jersey, we will have the opportunity to learn about security efforts at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. These opportunities to share best practices and lessons learned are invaluable.

Finally, as we look to the future of mass gathering security, I will be interested to learn from the witnesses – particularly Dr. Roberts – about the type of threats we will face in the future and how the Federal government can help address them. I again thank Chairwoman Brooks for holding this hearing today. I appreciated her partnership and willingness to work with me on important homeland security priorities, including mass gathering security.