

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Addressing Remaining Gaps in Federal, State, and Local Information Sharing***

February 26, 2015 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Counterterrorism and Intelligence Subcommittee hearing entitled “Addressing Remaining Gaps in Federal, State, and Local Information Sharing”:

“Information sharing is critical to our nation’s security. As I have said before, information sharing in the intelligence community is an evolving puzzle of pieces. Officials must gather and analyze these pieces of diverse and sometimes inconsistent information to create a single coherent picture. That picture is then shared with other officials, all of whom are working to keep our nation safe.

Since the 9/11 attacks, both Congress and the Executive Branch have addressed the systematic problems caused by both the failure to analyze and the failure to share information between law enforcement officials and first responders. Some of those failures have been remedied by simply requiring agencies to talk to each other and their colleagues within state, local and tribal governments.

As easy as it may sound, this has not been a simple process. Many agencies had cultures which promoted stove-piped information and prevented external sharing. Those agencies have since undergone a cultural shift. Some are still struggling with shifting from a need-to-know culture to a need-to-share environment. However, because we know the price of failure, Congress must continue to insist upon and oversee this transition.

Our insistence must be shown by not only pushing for better information sharing, but also by providing the tools necessary to achieve a high and concise level of sharing. Congress and the Federal government must do more to assure that state and local fusion centers can fully assist in the homeland security mission.

These centers form the backbone of an information-sharing infrastructure. While DHS and FBI are helping fusion centers to build analytical and operational capabilities, they must also help these centers measure and increase their homeland security value.

State and local fusion center partners can help by identifying and documenting the specific programs and activities that are most important for executing the missions for the state and local governments. This kind of guidance has several mutual benefits for all parties involved.

It will increase the effectiveness of each fusion center, will assure that the Federal tax dollar is being spent wisely, and most importantly, it will provide clear rules that will ensure that civil rights and civil liberties are safeguarded.

State and local fusion centers and their partners must get the assistance they need to be helpful in doing their part to keep this nation safe. Yet, as we sit here today, there are those who believe we should not fund the Department of Homeland Security. It seems intellectually dishonest to charge our witnesses here today and their partners within DHS with doing work we are not even willing to fund. As we consider the challenges we face, I look forward to hearing the assessment of each of our witnesses about the challenges that lie ahead for the information sharing environment.”

**# # #**

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please contact Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978