

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Keeping Pace with Trade, Travel, and Security: How does CBP Prioritize and Improve Staffing and Infrastructure?***

April 19, 2016 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Border and Maritime Security subcommittee hearing entitled “Keeping Pace with Trade, Travel, and Security: How does CBP Prioritize and Improve Staffing and Infrastructure?”:

“The Committee on Homeland Security has held many hearings over the years examining staffing and infrastructure challenges at ports of entry. While some progress has been made toward addressing those challenges, much more remains to be done to ensure that CBP has the staffing and infrastructure necessary to keep pace with travel and trade while continuing to secure our Nation’s borders in the face of evolving threats.

For example, we know that CBP remains thousands of officers short of the number its own staffing model indicates is necessary to staff ports of entry appropriately. Members of this Committee, including myself, have been asking for years, on a bipartisan basis, for this staffing model, but CBP has so far refused to comply.

As a result, we included a provision in recent CBP authorization legislation requiring CBP to provide the staffing model to Congress. That legislation was signed into law in February and the staffing model was due last month, but to my knowledge it has not yet been provided.

I want to hear from our witnesses today about when we can expect to receive the staffing model because, given how long this Committee has been asking for the document, it is in fact long, long overdue.

Also regarding staffing, CBP has had significant difficulty hiring the additional 2,000 officers funded by Congress in recent years. While I strongly support CBP’s efforts to ensure newly hired officers meet appropriate standards, the agency needs to do everything possible to recruit, hire, and retain suitable candidates.

I hope to hear from our witnesses today about the specific steps CBP is undertaking to overcome these hiring challenges and the timeline for getting the remaining officers on board. With respect to infrastructure at ports of entry – including at land, air, and sea ports – it simply was not built for modern travel, trade, technology, or security measures.

Like much of America’s aging infrastructure, we need to invest in its modernization to ensure our ports of entry – the gateways to our country – are able to welcome legitimate travel and trade while giving CBP personnel the tools necessary to help protect us from security threats.

I hope to hear from our CBP and General Services Administration witnesses today about how they identify and prioritize needs at ports of entry and where our most pressing needs are currently. I am particularly pleased that Tony Reardon, the National President of the National Treasury Employees Union, is joining us for the first time. His members, the men and women of CBP’s Office of Field Operations, are on the frontlines at our ports of entry every day. I look forward to hearing their perspectives through him in his testimony today.

Finally, I would note that we are fortunate to have many Members on this Committee with ports

of entry in or near their districts. These Members have a firsthand understanding of and keen interest in CBP staffing and infrastructure, and they will add a great deal to the discussion here today. I hope our witnesses will be sure to provide in a timely way any port-specific information Members may request regarding their districts.”

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

**United States House of Representatives**  
Committee on Homeland Security  
H2-117, Ford House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515  
Phone: (202) 226-2616 | Fax: (202) 226-4499  
<http://chsdemocrats.house.gov>