



STATEMENT OF

ANGELA BAILEY

Chief Human Capital Officer
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

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Subcommittee on Oversight, Management, and Accountability**

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Introduction

Chairwoman Torres Small, Ranking Member Crenshaw, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss efforts to enhance employee morale and engagement at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS or the Department).

I am Angela Bailey, the Department's Chief Human Capital Officer. I joined DHS in January 2016 as a career federal executive and have more than 38 years of service, 32 of those in human resources.

DHS was established in 2002, combining 22 different federal departments and agencies into a unified, integrated Cabinet agency. While each of our Components has its own distinct homeland security mission and history, we are unified and steadfast in our goal – to safeguard the American people, our homeland, and our values.

Many of our employees are on the front lines, executing our mission every day, performing extremely difficult work under some of the most challenging circumstances and conditions. They interact with the American public and people from around the world to prevent terrorism; enhance security; secure and manage our borders; administer and enforce our immigration laws; safeguard travel; monitor and secure cyberspace; respond to and provide relief from disasters; protect our national leaders; and prevent drug and human trafficking.

At the same time our employees are performing these incredibly important duties, the approximately 240,000 men and women in the Department are also mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, neighbors, and engaged members of their community. They worry about the same things other Americans worry about, including: student loan debt, making it on time to pick up their children from daycare or school, taking care of an elderly family member, or missing yet another family vacation due to work obligations. Adding to these concerns is the possibility of future government shutdowns, meaning our employees may work without pay, for some period of time, due to lapsed appropriations.

In fact, during the partial government shutdown last year, 86 percent of the DHS workforce continued to work without pay—most of those employees were our front-line law enforcement officers and agents who face danger each and every day. However, our 2019 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) results show that despite unmanageable workloads, delayed work, missed deadlines, and time lost restarting work for many of our employees, only three percent of respondents said they are looking for another job specifically because of the shutdown.

Another indicator of how dedicated our employees are to the DHS mission is that almost one thousand employees across the Department joined the DHS Volunteer Force, to alleviate stress the crisis on the Southern Border has on U.S. Customs and Border Protection and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement frontline personnel. While these employees were volunteering, others in their home offices sought to ensure their responsibilities were covered. These actions represent an incredible effort that speaks volumes about a workforce who values and supports each other day-to-day and steps up even more in crisis situations.

Employee Engagement

The Department's FEVS scores over the last several years reflect the hard work leadership at all levels has undertaken. DHS is listening to employee feedback and taking action. In an organization as enormous and diverse as DHS, change comes slowly and incrementally – yet change is happening.

The Partnership for Public Service and their Best Places scoring currently shows DHS decreased less than one point, yet this information is based on only three core FEVS questions out of 71. DHS tracks the Employee Engagement Index (EEI) score as calculated by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) from FEVS data. The EEI is comprised of 15 key questions that together are a good indicator of employee engagement. The DHS EEI improved by two percentage points in 2019. In fact, DHS is one of three very large agencies identified by OPM as having top EEI increases (the other two were the Air Force and the Army). In addition, the Department's positive responses increased on 55 of the core FEVS questions, decreased on only four, and those decreases were by just one percentage point.

The cornerstone of this positive change is the DHS Employee Engagement Steering Committee (EESC), chaired by the Under Secretary for Management and staffed by Component executives. This body serves as a forum for sharing ideas and best practices and helps ensure Component accountability. The EESC also represents a mixture of internal and external information exchange.

Internally, Components share ideas and knowledge for employee engagement with each other. Externally, for example, DHS is holding executive sessions with corporations to hear about their leadership practices. In a recent session, we gained tremendous insight into the benefits of an intentional approach to building a supportive culture. Our next panel session will focus on another corporation's culture change journey. Although the private sector is very different in many ways from the federal government, what is striking about the session so far, and I expect the same in future sessions, is how very similar we are in working to create an engaged culture, and how much we can learn from our shared challenges and successes.

Members of the EESC are also responsible for Component-level employee engagement action plans, which are updated each year based on FEVS results and are approved by Component leadership. Through this mechanism, DHS has empowered Components to tailor their plans according to their mission and workforce needs. In addition, the EESC has created a loop of accountability that keeps leadership focused on formulating and executing plans.

DHS data from the FEVS shows that over the last four years, when DHS employees were asked the important question, "I believe the results of this survey will be used to make my agency a better place to work," we have made consistent progress informing employees that their input is heard. In fact, this year 40 percent of our employees responded positively to this question, which is only one percentage point below the government average – and eight percentage points above our score in 2015.

The General Accountability Office (GAO) has recognized our strong work and success addressing engagement and accountability. Of the two employee engagement items on the Department's High Risk List, GAO rewarded our progress on Component Action Plans with a

“fully addressed” status in 2018, and our progress on improving FEVS scores with a “mostly addressed” status just last month.

Below are some notable examples of DHS Component accomplishments toward employee engagement:

- With the release of the most recent *Best Places to Work in the Federal Government* rankings, the Partnership for Public Service specifically mentioned the U.S. Secret Service as having substantial, sustained improvement from 2016 forward. This progress is the result of paying attention to FEVS results, reaching out directly to employees to solicit further feedback on root causes of dissatisfaction, and finding three main focus areas to take action: staffing, worklife balance, and leader development. This is a textbook example of executing on the Department’s expectations for action planning, and it has paid off.
- Another example is an initiative of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), which offers “Local Action Planning” at sites with lower levels of employee satisfaction to identify root causes of challenges and solutions for local implementation. TSA sends expert teams on-site to conduct focus groups, make recommendations, and guide local leaders through the planning process. TSA has experienced positive trends in FEVS ratings in these targeted locations. The Department’s Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO) is collaborating with TSA and OPM to pilot another tool, the DHS Leadership Survey, that allows employees to provide upward feedback on their first, second, and third-line supervisors. DHS experienced tremendous success with this tool at Los Angeles International Airport and with the Federal Air Marshals Service and is moving forward with two new airport sites in 2020.

We know that meaningful engagement takes continuous attention and it starts with leaders. Within my office, the DHS OCHCO, we take FEVS results very seriously, at even the most local levels, including making personnel changes to improve the organization.

In November 2019, OCHCO brought together the executive cadre of DHS to hear from the Acting Secretary and from our Presidential Rank Awardees in what has become an annual gathering focused on excellence in leadership. One of the featured presentations was from the leadership team from Los Angeles International Airport that discussed their experience with the DHS Leadership Survey.

DHS has also strengthened its agency-wide leadership development programs by providing more opportunities for lower-grade employees to begin their leadership journeys, additional rotational experiences, and further career path guidance. Several examples of these efforts are highlighted below:

- In Fiscal Year (FY) 2019, DHS implemented a brand-new part of its leader development strategy called the “Leadership Bridges Program.” Instead of waiting to develop leadership skills at each level, this new element of the strategy establishes a variety of products and tools for employees seeking to increase their capabilities and aspire to higher leadership levels.

- One of the most exciting new products is the roll out of a program to prepare employees in supervisory acumen ahead of their advancement to supervisory positions. DHS launched an innovative self-paced program that meets the needs of our geographically dispersed workforce and provides motivated employees—at any grade level—with a set of curated activities central to the development of essential supervisory leadership competencies.
- Additionally, in FY20, DHS will launch a 6-month pilot Supervisory Leadership Bridges Cohort program to guide participants in specific job series through a rigorous process to identify traits validated to be predictive of leadership success and build on those traits with classroom, mentoring, and experiential learning. As DHS anticipates both a hiring surge and significant retirement in the 1800 job series, the Leadership Bridges Program provides a ready talent pool of employees who will hit the ground running, already familiar with the critical supervisory acumen that results in an engaged, proficient workforce.

Employee and Family Readiness and Employee Retention:

Kicked off in 2019 and continuing into 2020, DHS’s current signature employee engagement initiative is Employee and Family Readiness (EFR). With a workforce that operates day in and day out under tremendous stress and challenge, OCHCO identified the need for a more robust infrastructure of support not only for employees, but for their family members as well.

One key program we are working on across all Components is enhanced initiatives to prevent suicides. We are working to improve and expand existing programs while also adding new approaches. In addition, DHS established an Employee and Family Readiness Council (EFRC), made up of representatives from all the Components, that serves in an advisory capacity to the EFR Initiative. The goals are to develop and promote a unified strategy and common vision of EFR, explore opportunities to share resources between Components, set annual priorities, and collaborate to address these priorities across the enterprise.

In addition to permanent programs such as suicide prevention, the EFRC identified and ranked 18 family resilience issues by priority to create annual goals and began working on the top five in 2019. These five areas were: general stress, personal relationship issues, mental health, dependent care, and financial concerns. Work continues on all of these areas in 2020, plus we have added two new focus areas: social connectedness and wellness.

- **General Stress** – In FY19, 24 mindfulness resilience and stress reduction training classes were held across DHS, reaching over 700 employees. The response to this training was positive and additional courses are planned for FY20. This training helps our employees, in particular the law enforcement community, stay in the present, let go of negative experiences, and increase resilience to adverse life events.
- **Personal Relationships** – DHS is using a two-pronged approach to address personal relationships, to include Stronger Bonds training and counseling through Employee Assistance Programs. For example, the Stronger Bonds curriculum draws upon proven strategies from couples therapy and research on commitment and relationship development. This curriculum was reviewed by the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and

Practices and is listed in the U.S. Government's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's registry of evidence-based programs and practices. In 2019, OCHCO trained 45 DHS employees to facilitate Stronger Bonds Workshops for DHS employees and their family members, and in 2020 we plan to train more DHS employees to facilitate this course.

- **Mental Health** – DHS will launch a public-facing website in 2020 to provide easily accessible information for employees and their families. The site is life-event based, with a focus on encouraging individuals to seek help to address concerns. The overarching message of this initiative is that there is no stigma in reaching out for help. The site soft-launched in 2019 and will be updated for the 2020 full launch with two new content areas designed for spouses and children of DHS employees.
- **Dependent Care** – According to OPM research, by 2021, 43 percent of DHS employees will have childcare responsibilities and 32 percent will have adult care responsibilities. To ensure that DHS understands the needs of the workforce, the Department is currently conducting a nationwide workforce needs assessment. This effort will allow DHS to identify both the current needs of its workforce regarding dependent care as well as projected needs five to ten years in the future.
- **Financial Concerns** – The Financial Literacy Campaign, “Invest in Your Financial Health,” provides helpful information and accessible financial resources, addresses common concerns, and directs employees to internal programs promoting financial wellness. This campaign kicked off in March 2019 and runs through March of 2020.
- **Wellness** – An awareness campaign encouraging healthy lifestyle choices kicks off this month. Each month, articles and/or podcasts will be made available to employees and their families, through the DHS public-facing website.
- **Social Connectedness** – Initiatives in this area include exploring ways to facilitate awareness of employee resources and affinity groups across Components. DHS is also seeking to connect with spouse networks and family support groups to provide information about the EFR Initiative.

These programs noted above are coupled with other traditional retention strategies, such as cyber retention pay, special salary rates, student loan repayments, childcare subsidies, and employee engagement, to round out the overarching DHS retention strategy.

Hiring

Due to DHS's critical mission, we are fortunate to have an abundance of applicants for many of the jobs we post. In order to serve both the applicants and DHS well, we have worked to innovate and streamline our hiring practices to reduce time-to-hire and get people onboard as fast as practical. Through our innovations, our time-to-hire is down to as low as 107 days, a reduction of 34 percent from our rate five years ago, and we continue to look for more efficient and innovative practices every day.

While DHS hiring strategies include time-to-hire, hiring hubs, and hiring events, they start with DHS thinking about not only our requirements for today, but also five to ten years from now. Determining how many and what type of employees will we need is a critical first step, followed by a discussion of the kind of skills and abilities we need, as well as where will we find such talent. Based on these discussions, strategies concerning how best to “buy or build” talent, including partnering with local schools, universities, industry, the military, and our local communities, are developed. These strategies are coupled with examinations of our hiring process, finding ways to streamline the hiring process and making it less arduous for those applying for our positions, and identifying technology advancements that can integrate our hiring systems making the process more efficient.

The reason these hiring strategies are so important is that, by ensuring our positions are filled with the right leaders and technically skilled personnel, we can drive down overtime, shorten deployments, and create a better work-life balance for our employees – all of which our employees have told us through the FEVS and other focus groups that they desire. Our hiring strategies help us retain our talented workforce. However, just having positions filled is not enough to retain our employees, or more importantly, to ensure that while they are carrying out their missions they have the tools necessary to deal with all that the job and life throws their way. As a result, and noted above, we place special emphasis on taking care of our employees and their families as the cornerstone of our retention strategy.

Despite our hiring efforts, there is always room for improvement. Additionally, a way for Congress to help us is to support our legislative proposal, the *Department of Homeland Security Enhanced Hiring Act*. DHS seeks to use this authority in an effort to streamline and simplify the agency’s hiring authorities in a manner that ensures the Department is able to expeditiously hire the best-qualified candidates for mission-critical positions and sustain its record of hiring veterans. This legislative proposal would enhance the current noncompetitive hiring authorities for veterans and establish other important hiring authorities. I respectfully request that Congress expeditiously takes up and passes such legislation.

Conclusion

The Department recently celebrated the Secretary’s Awards Ceremony, which recognizes achievements of dedicated and talented DHS employees from across the country. In listening to the descriptions of all the accomplishments, I was reminded that every day the men and women of DHS carry out difficult and often dangerous work that often is unseen by the American public. They do an outstanding job and have a deep commitment to the mission. Through our efforts dedicated to employee engagement, retention, and hiring, OCHCO is determined to enhance their work experience and home life and honor their contributions.

My office, in collaboration with partners across the Department, will continue to enhance our efforts, listen to and act on employee feedback, and support the Department’s leadership commitment to our workforce.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. The Department would not be successful without your support and the support of our brave men and women who sacrifice each day to make our country safe. I look forward to your questions.



Angela Bailey
Chief Human Capital Officer

Angela Bailey has dedicated more than 38 years to public service, with almost 32 of those years in human resources. Ms. Bailey was appointed as the Department of Homeland Security's Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO) in January 2016. She is responsible for the Department's human capital program, which includes human resources policy, systems, and programs for strategic workforce planning, recruitment and hiring, pay and leave, performance management, employee development, executive resources, labor relations, work/life and safety and health. She also serves on the United States Coast Guard Academy Board of Trustees.

She also served as the Chief Operating Officer (COO) for the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) from November 2013 to January 2016. In this role, she provided overall organization management to improve OPM's performance, mission and goals through strategic and performance planning, measurement, analysis, and regular progress assessment. She was also responsible for managing OPM's human, financial, acquisition and information technology to achieve OPM's program results efficiently, economically, and effectively.

Other roles at OPM included serving as Deputy Associate Director for Recruitment and Hiring and Associate Director for Employee Services, including as the agency's CHCO. In that role, she was responsible for the design, development and implementation of government-wide human resources policy, systems, and programs for strategic workforce planning, recruitment and hiring, pay and leave, performance management, employee development, executive resources, labor relations, and work/life. In addition, she led OPM's implementation of the President's Veterans Employment Initiative, which resulted in 20-year highs in terms of the percentage of new federal employees who are veterans. As the CHCO for OPM, she also oversaw the agency's internal human resources office. Ms. Bailey also spearheaded OPM's flagship initiative on hiring reform, and the Pathways Programs for students and recent graduates, including the Presidential Management Fellows Program.

Ms. Bailey began her career with the Social Security Administration. She later worked for the Department of Defense in several different components and Defense agencies. She has served in many roles, including Budget Analyst, Labor Relations Officer, and as the Director of Human Resources for the Defense Contract Management Agency.

Ms. Bailey has a master's degree in Leadership from Bellevue University and participated in Harvard University's Kennedy School National Preparedness Leadership Initiative for Executives in 2012. She is also a 2017 Meritorious Presidential Rank Award recipient and a 2019 National Academy of Public Administration Fellow.