

# Statement of Ranking Member Bonnie Watson Coleman

## Subcommittee on Transportation and Protective Security Hearing

### *Assessing the TSA Checkpoint: The PreCheck Program and Airport Wait Times*

**May 17, 2018**

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TSA has long struggled with how to most efficiently and effectively manage its resources. In 2011, TSA introduced the PreCheck program for low-risk passengers who provide fingerprints and undergo background checks to receive expedited security screening.

Used in combination with intelligence and watchlist matching programs, PreCheck allows TSA to focus its limited screening resources more effectively. The PreCheck program has had some setbacks.

Unfortunately, by 2013, TSA's efforts to drive more passenger traffic into PreCheck lanes caused it to adopt a practice known as "Managed Inclusion" which relied heavily upon Behavior Detection Officers and iPad randomizing apps to expedite screening for large numbers of passengers who had not enrolled in PreCheck.

Last Congress, Ranking Member Thompson introduced a bill to curtail the use of Managed Inclusion, and after the bill passed the House, then-Administrator Neffenger directed that the practice be phased out.

Although Managed Inclusion came to an end in September 2015, TSA continues to use Passenger Screening Canines and other tools to pre-screen passengers who have not enrolled in PreCheck and provide them access to expedited screening.

TSA has said it intends to modify these practices. Given the evolving threat landscape, it must do so expeditiously. Every passenger must receive an appropriate level of screening. TSA must also address the underlying factors that have led to these practices.

TSA has cited a lack of enrollments in PreCheck and other DHS trusted traveler programs as one reason for their development.

However, these practices may provide a disincentive for those who otherwise may consider enrolling in PreCheck, thus inhibiting the growth of the program.

TSA has struggled to partner with industry effectively to encourage creative enrollment solutions, as the agency withdrew a request for proposals in 2016 citing cybersecurity concerns.

I encourage TSA to work through those concerns and issue a new solicitation.

In addition, TSA has cited growing passenger volume and a lack of sufficient staffing as major challenges.

In the summer of 2016, we saw unacceptably-long wait times at TSA checkpoints, as staffing levels were insufficient to process the number of travelers.

TSA has increased its staff since that time, but it has not kept pace with increases in passenger volumes, and the President's Fiscal Year 2019 budget proposal does not request enough staff to close the gap.

I hope future TSA budget proposals will be more realistic when it comes to staffing levels.

By increasing trusted traveler program enrollments and staffing levels, TSA could take another step forward in developing a risk-based security model.

I also want to mention an article from this morning's New York Times, which I'd like to enter into the record. This article discusses a "secret watchlist" that TSA maintains to monitor people who may be potential threats at airport checkpoints on the grounds that they may appear suspicious or unruly.

I look forward to hearing more from TSA about this watchlist, as I am concerned about the civil liberty implications of such a list.

Finally, at a hearing where we are discussing passenger volumes with travel industry experts, I would be remiss if I did not note some disturbing trends in recent travel data.

While domestic travel continues to increase, the same cannot be said of international travel to the United States.

According to the Department of Commerce, in just the first three months of Donald Trump's presidency, nearly 700,000 fewer foreign travelers visited the U.S. than normal, representing a 4.2% decrease and a loss of \$2.7 billion in spending.

Over the first nine months of 2017, U.S. arrivals dropped by 1.4% despite international travel increasing worldwide by 4.6%.

It is plain and obvious that the President's rhetoric and policies are having a depressing effect on the desire of foreign travelers to visit our beautiful country.

His racially- and religiously-motivated travel bans, his obsession with building a wall and separating children from their mothers at the border, and his disparaging remarks toward the people of Mexico, Haiti, El Salvador, and the entire continent of Africa hurt our country's reputation and send the message that outsiders are not welcome here.

Just yesterday, he called immigrants "animals"—disrespectful, dangerous language that should never be spoken by a President.

Tourism represents the seventh largest employer in the U.S., as international travel supports 1.2 million American jobs, accounting for \$32.4 billion in wages. I look forward to discussing with our travel industry witnesses how the President has put their industry at risk.