

Statement of Ranking Member Donald M. Payne, Jr.

Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications Field Hearing

Securing Our Communities: Federal Support to High-Risk Urban Areas

April 23, 2018

Everyone here understands that protecting the nation from bad actors is of the utmost importance. September 11th and subsequent terrorist acts and thwarted plots have taught us that there are people who constantly look for ways to exploit our vulnerabilities. Those bad actors' methods of attack have evolved over time in an attempt to stay ahead of our security enhancements.

It is more important than ever before to ensure our first responders have the proper resources to plan, train, and respond to emerging threats effectively. In my district, the 10th Congressional District of New Jersey, we know very well the important role that FEMA's preparedness grants play in keeping our citizens safe and secure.

My district is home to Newark Liberty International Airport, the New Jersey Transit Authority, the Port Newark-Elizabeth Marine Terminal, and a dense area of industrial facilities that has been referred to as "the most dangerous two miles in America."

In recent years, events such as the pipe bombs found Elizabeth, New Jersey, which is a neighboring district, serve as a reminder that there are those with intent and means to do harm. Of course, we are also situated close to one of the most targeted cities in America, New York City.

Time and time again, we have seen where investing in first responders have helped thwart or respond to these attacks. Such instances underscore how important FEMA's funding is to state and locals.

For these reasons, I have been troubled by the fact that the last two Trump Administration budget proposals would make significant cuts to these critical funding streams.

Fortunately, Congress has rejected these misguided cuts, and my hope is that we continue to reject any proposals that will weaken preparedness and security for those on the ground protecting the public day in and day out.

Moreover, Federal first responder funding should be robust and predictable, so that our State and local governments can effectively plan for future investments.

In 2011, we saw FEMA grant funding fall significantly. It is my hope that we can see those funding levels restored, and that is what Democrats on the House Homeland Security Committee have worked to do.

I intend to continue to fight for preparedness funding, as I know that it has been a lifeline to state and local governments, who are already struggling to stretch their budgets.