

Opening Statement Ranking Member Bonnie Watson Coleman

Subcommittee on Transportation and Protective Services Hearing

“How Can the United States Secret Service Evolve to Meet the Challenges Ahead”

June 8, 2017

I will start with saying that I am very concerned about the institutional, operational, and budgetary challenges that Secret Service currently faces. Even prior to the election of Donald Trump, the Secret Service was plagued by low staff morale, low recruitment, low retention, resource limitations and cultural problems.

Then we get to 2016. In that Presidential Election year, the Secret Service was busier than ever protecting multiple presidential candidates, protecting President Obama, and overseeing security for major national and international events. The Secret Service remarkably rose to the occasion and did it all, with low staff numbers. The demands of carrying out the protective mission have only expanded since the election.

Today, the Secret Service must provide protection for President Trump, the First Lady, his children—including his adult children who travel regularly for business and pleasure to places like Uruguay, UAE, the Dominican Republic, Canada, and Aspen. Through the winter, the President traveled weekly to his private club in Florida, the Mar-a-Lago Golf Club. Agents involved in currency and cyber investigative work have had to be reassigned to duties in New York City, since the First Lady continues to reside in the heart of Manhattan. Agents have been forced to crisscross the globe at what seems like a record pace. While the cost of President Obama’s travel totaled roughly \$97 million for the entire eight years of his presidency, President Trump’s travel cost taxpayers \$20 million in just the first eighty days.

Beyond the dollars and cents, there is a hidden cost—the time that the men and women who bravely serve in the Secret Service are taken away from their other homeland security and investigative work as well as their families—as they shadow the globe-trotting Trumps. I have heard story after story of Secret Service agents burning out and we need to talk about this. Many of the burnout stories I heard, were before President Trump took office. I hope to hear today how the Trump Family jet-setting lifestyle is impacting the Secret Service.

Financial resources are also of great concern to me. Particularly, I am concerned that the Secret Service’s protection is being used while members of the Trump family are pursuing business interests abroad on behalf of the President at the of expense taxpayers. I will be introducing a bill in the coming days to prevent the President from becoming enriched from the taxpayer dollars.

In March, we learned that the Secret Service asked the Office of Management and Budget for an additional \$60 million to carry out its current obligations. It was reported that the White House flatly rejected the request. If true, that is absurd. Here you have an agency stretched thin prior to the new Administration, their protectee assignments increase significantly with the new Administration, then they ask for additional money to absorb the new costs incurred and they are rebuffed. I have little confidence that the President’s budget proposal that was released two weeks ago is adequate for the agency. I hope that we hear today some honest, expert opinions on what the Secret Service needs to address its longstanding challenges and carry out its mission.

I also hope that we get a chance to hear today how the Secret Service is addressing some of the long-standing concerns on management practices as came to light in the *Moore* racial discrimination litigation and the recommendations made by the Protective Mission Panel.

I want you and everyone on our subcommittee to know that I am here to work hand-in-hand with you to help provide the Secret Service with needed resources and oversight. I hope that Director Alles’ leadership will pick up where Director Clancy left off in implementing key reforms to improve the agency’s performance, address staffing challenges, and elevate the agency’s standing with employees and perspective employees.