



TESTIMONY OF

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BEFORE

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Subcommittee on Transportation & Maritime

ON

“An Examination of TSA’s FY 2024 Budget and Priorities”

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Good afternoon Chairman Gimenez, Ranking Member Thanedar, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me to testify on the President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 President's Budget Request, which includes a \$10.4B request for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). I am honored to be here and am grateful for the longstanding and constructive partnership TSA enjoys with this Subcommittee and all the support you have provided over the years. I look forward to working with the new members of the committee, including Ranking Member Thanedar, Representative LaLota, Representative Lee, and Representative Garcia.

First and foremost, I would like to thank the Committee and Congress for your continued support of our workforce most notably through approving the increased pay plan which was included in the FY 2023 Omnibus Appropriations Act. The President's FY 2024 Budget Request includes the annualization of the pay plan Congress approved in FY 2023. This pay plan matches the minimum compensation levels with the General Schedule (GS) pay scale and makes the pay for the TSA workforce comparable to every other federal employee. I want to be clear that pay initiatives must include all TSA employees. Oftentimes many of our TSA employees who are not customer-facing are overlooked. We must acknowledge and recognize their impact and contributions to our overall mission. Every link in the chain of our TSA workforce is equal and contributes directly to the security of our transportation systems. All are due the respect, treatment, and pay that they have earned. The comparable pay plan was not only the right thing to do by our workforce, but it is already paying dividends in ways that will have a measurable impact on mission performance. Since the December 2022 announcement that Congress

included funding for comparable pay in the 2023 Omnibus, we have already seen the following indicators of success:

- Attrition trends indicate that TSA may realize as much as a 40-50% reduction in attrition moving forward. When you factor the estimated cost of over \$12,000 to onboard new staff, this will result in a significant cost savings for the government.
- TSA has gone from losing an average of 381 officers per two-week pay period at the beginning of the fiscal year down to losing an average of 202 officers per pay period over the last five pay periods. At almost half the losses, if this trend continues, we may need to hire as many as 5,000 fewer officers next year.
- At the same time that we are reducing attrition, we are continuing to hire and are achieving net gains in overall officer headcount. The pay period ending April 22, 2023 was our fifth pay period in a row in which we saw our total officer headcount increase, and over the past five pay periods we have averaged a net increase of 212 officers per pay period.

Additionally, I would also want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the superior efforts of the entire TSA workforce, convey what they have accomplished, and explain our future goals and objectives. So far in FY2023:

- TSA has screened 550 million travelers, an average of more than 2.2 million passengers per day, with 99.2 percent of passengers waiting less than 30 minutes at airport security checkpoints, and 98.8 percent of TSA PreCheck<sup>®</sup> passengers waiting less than 10 minutes. We need to maintain our wait time standards while ensuring security in light of increasing passenger volumes.

- As of June 7, 2023, TSA has deployed 302 CAT-1 systems, upgraded 115 CAT-1 systems to CAT-2 capability, and deployed 217 new CT systems, which significantly improve security effectiveness and efficiency while reducing physical contact.
- TSA has begun the process of enrolling 10 new airlines as well as nearly 3 million more individuals, and achieved the milestone of exceeding 16 million enrolled members in the TSA PreCheck Program. We are also working to onboard additional enrollment vendors to expand enrollment options:
  - This expansion of enrollment providers will increase the network of locations where applicants may go to complete their membership in TSA PreCheck.
  - TSA PreCheck programs provide more efficient screening and a better checkpoint experience, while also maintaining the required level of security for passengers by allowing TSA to allocate resources to areas of the greatest risk. TSA also vets over 30 million individuals across transportation worker populations on a daily basis. TSA's vetting of transportation workers comprises intelligence-related checks and may also include checks for lawful presence and/or criminal history record information.
- We've provided assistance to 42,277 passengers with disabilities/medical conditions and/or required special assistance via the TSA Cares program. We are on pace to provide assistance to 63,416 passengers in all of FY 2023, which would represent a 39% increase over FY 2022 (45,502). Passengers indicated autism spectrum as the medical condition that they need assistance with the most in FY 2023 (9,424 or 22% of all requests). It remained the top reason for special assistance for the fifth consecutive Fiscal Year.

- Our screening workforce has prevented more than 4,500 firearms from being carried into the secure area of airports or airplane passenger cabins, after a record-setting year in 2022. This is a testament to the security proficiency of our Transportation Security Officers.
- We have trained 4,120 flight crew members in Crew Member Self-Defense training to address increasing trends in unruly passengers, and partnered with the Federal Aviation Administration to rescind TSA PreCheck eligibility for passengers who are disruptive aboard flights or during security screening. In especially egregious situations, TSA has taken action to limit individuals from flying in the future if they are assessed to pose a threat to aviation security.
- The Federal Air Marshal Service (FAMS) covered aviation security missions involving identified high-risk travelers, served on federal task forces with our law enforcement partner agencies to investigate transportation terrorism and criminal acts, and continued to lead TSA's Insider Threat program. FAMS also provided security enhancements to all transportation modes. The Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response (VIPR) Teams completed over 4,800 missions in aviation and surface transportation modes.
- We expanded the Transportation Security Officer (TSO) new hire training from two to three weeks, providing additional instruction on image interpretation, TSA culture, enhancing the passenger experience, and improved focus and concentration. TSA trained over 5,222 TSO new hires as of June 7, 2023, and this month TSA officially opened TSA Academy West adjacent to Harry Reid International Airport in Las Vegas, Nevada.
- TSA established the first performance-based, outcome-focused cybersecurity-related Security Directives and Security Program Amendments that require mandatory incident reporting and the adoption of mitigation measures to the most critical owners and operators

of transportation infrastructure in pipelines, rail, and aviation. TSA is committed to enhancing and sustaining industry's resilience to cybersecurity attacks. TSA is working on a rulemaking that will permanently codify critical cybersecurity requirements for pipeline and rail modes.

- TSA published Information Circulars to Transportation Systems Sector stakeholders with recommended actions to reduce vulnerabilities associated with cybersecurity-related threats.
- We also published the Innovation Doctrine—the first of its kind in government, which lays out agreed upon current best practices and establishes mechanisms like Local Innovation for TSA (LIFT) Cells across the country to foster a culture of innovation, provide resources and pathways to solve local-level problems, and expand the innovation ecosystem around transportation security. It also creates an Innovation Pipeline, a disciplined, repeatable, and scalable process for innovation across TSA to out-innovate those that threaten the traveling public, and leverages the TSA Innovation Task Force's expertise in the evaluation and demonstration of promising technologies.
- We continued several programs and initiatives to recruit and retain TSOs, including:
  - A performance-based rewards program called the Model Officer Recognition that provided 19,478 monetary awards or pay increases to top-performing TSOs in FY 2022;
  - Authorized TSO retention incentives at 144 airports, benefitting more than 10,000 employees nationwide. Although these are still needed in certain locations moving forward, the pay equity funded by the FY 2023 enactment will dramatically reduce the need for these incentives.

- TSA and our partners expanded digital identity technologies that improve security and enhance the customer experience, including testing TSA PreCheck touchless identity solutions, collaborating with Apple and other private sector partners to incorporate mobile driver's licenses (mDL) into security checkpoint operations, and publishing an Identity Management Roadmap which lays out a comprehensive end-to-end strategy for identity verification at TSA.
- In coordination with DHS Science & Technology, TSA established an Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) Test Bed Program at Los Angeles International Airport—in addition to the previously established one at Miami International Airport—to test and evaluate detection, tracking, and identification technology for UAS that enter restricted airspace. TSA continues to collect data on performance of these various technologies to share with industry and government partners.

TSA's vision is to remain agile, embodied by a professional workforce that engages its partners and the American people to address current and future challenges and threats to the homeland. To that end, within the first year of my term as Administrator, I issued the "TSA Strategy" and established three strategic priorities to guide the agency's workforce through its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary: (1) Improve Security and Safeguard the Nation's Transportation System; (2) Accelerate Action; and (3) Commit to Our People. I have twice published Administrator's Intent documents delineating and updating the short and medium-term goals and objectives to achieve those strategic priorities. At the end of this month, I expect to publish the third iteration of the Administrator's Intent, which will focus on the 20 most critical cross-cutting issues that require collaboration across the entire agency with senior executive accountability. We have been in close consultation with your staff and our stakeholders regarding the issues that should be

included in this document. The Administrator's Intent 3.0 is aligned with the Department of Homeland Security's priorities as well as national strategies and directives including the National Security Strategy, the National Cybersecurity Strategy, and the Executive Order on Transforming Federal Customer Experience and Service Delivery to Rebuild Trust in Government.

We have also strengthened our partnerships across the spectrum—from private industry, to foreign partners and international organizations, advisory committees, academia, state and local governments, and our federal partners—in order to increase collaboration, security, information sharing, and maximizing the customer experience in the new travel environment while minimizing negative impacts on travelers and commerce.

Securing and safeguarding the Nation's transportation system requires innovative solutions to address cybersecurity threats and risks associated with the continued integration of advanced electronic and networked systems. The FY 2024 President's Budget includes an increase of \$10.4M for cybersecurity staffing, as well as the development and implementation of enhanced cybersecurity-related measures to improve cyber resiliency across the U.S. Transportation Systems Sector. Across the transportation sector, TSA continues to help partners build cyber resilience and improve incident response, focusing on the pipeline, rail, and aviation sub-sectors. With those stakeholders, TSA hosts a variety of planning meetings, intelligence briefings, and tabletop exercises to ensure partners are aware and prepared to respond to emerging issues. I have personally visited pipelines and other critical infrastructure operators to discuss the evolving cybersecurity threat, and to understand the challenges and successes of implementing the current security directives and program amendments.



This year, as required by Congress, TSA will deliver for the first time an unconstrained Capital Investment Plan that describes an ideal future state in which TSA is able to mitigate more risk to the transportation sector with additional resources. It is imperative that TSA continues to invest in, acquire, and field new technologies to strengthen transportation security.

The transportation sector will remain a top target for malicious actors including international and domestic terrorists due to the prevalence of soft targets within the sector, the public accessibility of many transportation modes, and the importance of transportation infrastructure to the Nation. The agency carefully monitors this evolving threat environment and the need to strategically manage risks. Risk-based decision making is inherent to the TSA mission of protecting the Nation's transportation systems to ensure the freedom of movement for people and commerce. The challenges and risks TSA encounters will foreseeably become more complex, and the agency needs to position itself to be both more strategic in responding to risks and in developing solutions. A critical dependency in risk mitigation is sufficient funding that would allow TSA to continue to evolve transportation security in high-risk areas.

In conjunction with the FY 2024 President's Budget, the Administration offers two proposals to increase availability of funding to resource TSA's strategic priorities and help TSA address emerging threats. First, it includes a legislative proposal to end the diversion of passenger fee collections for deficit reduction and make \$1.6B of the fees available for their intended purpose of offsetting TSA's Operations and Support appropriation for aviation security. Second, the Budget includes a legislative proposal to transition access control at exit lanes to airport authorities and commercial airports under federal regulatory authorities, which will result in a projected savings of \$111.0M. If approved, TSA will work with the remaining airports that do not currently provide their own exit lane security to integrate exit lane security into their

perimeter security plans and assess those plans regularly. The proposal will enable TSA to better focus its resources on screening functions and risk-based security measures.

TSA's level of success is influenced by the help of Congress as well as our professional, vigilant, and engaged workforce. That is why "Commit to Our People" is one of our three strategic priorities. The initial funding Congress provided in FY 2023 to TSA allows for that continued commitment. The FY 2024 President's Budget includes \$1.4B to fully support the TSA workforce pay initiatives started in FY 2023.

The strategic priority of "Commit to Our People" also entails ensuring that we provide our workforce with the necessary advanced technology to be successful. Today's evolving threats require a dynamic and responsive TSA. Access to greater technology enables our passenger screening workforce to assess potential threats quickly and efficiently and also supports a more seamless experience for the traveler. To that end, the FY 2024 President's Budget includes \$70.4M to procure additional systems within the Checkpoint Property Screening System (CPSS) (i.e. Computed Tomography (CT)), and \$11.0M for Credential Authentication Technology (CAT) programs. These systems will address capability gaps, and detect new and evolving threats to civil aviation in current property screening technology reliably and efficiently, while also improving the customer experience. It is imperative that we equip our frontline workforce with the necessary tools to combat persistent threats. TSA needs a total of 3,585 CAT and 2,263 CT machines to reach full operational capability (FOC). Currently, CPSS procurements are an estimated 38 percent of FOC, which puts deployments at approximately 30 percent for CPSS and 57 percent for CAT. Based on past, present, and current projected funding, TSA will meet FOC for CAT machines and CPSS in FY 2049 and FY 2042, respectively. Full and dedicated funding for CPSS and CAT is imperative to our nation's security.

Furthermore, there are a number of investments in Operation and Support that require sustained funding to ensure the transportation sector stays secure. Some of these investments include:

- \$251.0M to provide the TSA workforce a 5.2 percent pay raise.
- \$39.0M for Transportation Security Equipment Maintenance to fund anticipated maintenance costs of TSA's checkpoint and checked baggage screening technologies based on current contractual requirements.
- \$19.0M and 24 positions for the implementation and expansion of the REAL ID Program.
- \$11.3M for maintenance, technical support, and engineering contracts for Credential Authentication Technology.
- \$10.0M to properly support the National Deployment Office Travel increases, which will further support the deployment of officers to airports in need of additional staffing.
- \$4.5M and 45 positions to expand and enhance dedicated pipeline security assessment teams to conduct inspections and assessments on the Surface Transportation System.
- \$3.8M to enhance TSA's Insider Threat Program.
- \$2.7M and 6 positions to support Executive Order 14058 to enhance Customer Experience Strategic initiatives.

As you know, TSA was established by the *Aviation and Transportation Security Act* in the wake of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks and was given the urgent task of protecting our nation's transportation systems. Since that day, we have remained steadfast in our commitment to provide the highest level of security across all modes of transportation and work with our partners to stay

ahead of evolving threats. In the years since 9/11, and specifically over the past fiscal year, TSA has not only had to address ever-present physical threats to aviation, but also dynamic and emerging cybersecurity threats to our nation's aviation, rail, as well as hazardous liquid and natural gas pipeline infrastructure. TSA works closely with the transportation industry to provide agile and responsive security across all modes of transportation through passenger and cargo screening, vetting and credentialing personnel in critical transportation sectors, law enforcement, regulatory compliance, and international cooperation.

Today, within the aviation network, TSA is responsible for the security of more than 430 federalized airports, with screening services forecasted this summer for more than 22,000 domestic flights (at pre-pandemic levels) and nearly 2,300 outbound international flights per day. With travel volume rebounding, TSA routinely screens more than 2.2 million passengers, 5 million carry-on bags and 1.4 million pieces of checked baggage daily for explosives and other dangerous items, and in many locations across the nation. TSA expects passenger volume to eventually exceed our pre-pandemic FY 2019 levels, which averaged up to 2.3 million per day. The FY 2024 President's Budget includes \$197.1M to enable TSA to continue to recruit and retain a workforce able to meet increasing demands of passenger travel volume and maintaining security effectiveness. In addition to these core security functions, we also ensure regulatory compliance in aviation through the work of more than 1,285 aviation, cargo, and surface transportation security inspectors.

In the surface realm, TSA works closely with transportation system owners and operators to protect the critical surface transportation systems that connect cities, manufacturers and retailers and power our economy through more than 4 million miles of roadways; nearly 140,000 miles of railroad track; more than 470 tunnels; and over 3.3 million miles of pipeline. TSA's

security inspectors conduct approximately 8,000 surface inspections annually in pursuing a risk-based approach for securing a large and complex network of transportation systems and critical infrastructure.

Since TSA's creation, the modes and methods of terrorist attacks have become more decentralized and opportunistic, and aviation and other transport hubs remain high-value targets. Threats to aviation and surface transportation are persistent and constantly evolving. To meet these challenges, we must continue to be responsive, innovate, rapidly deploy new solutions, and maximize the impact of our resources.

The FY 2024 President's Budget aligns with TSA's strategy to improve security and safeguard the nation's transportation system, accelerate action, and reinforce TSA's commitment to advancing its strategy. Thanks to Congress' support for TSA through the FY 2023 enactment, the FY 2024 President's Budget honors commitments to our workforce by providing appropriate compensation and other benefits while addressing capability gaps to ensure that the nation's transportation security remains the safest in the world.

Securing our nation's transportation system is a complex task that requires robust partnerships and a well-trained, dedicated workforce. Funding in the FY 2024 President's Budget will have a positive impact on all TSA employees—from Transportation Security Officers, Federal Air Marshals, inspectors, canine handlers, explosive specialists, intelligence and vetting analysts, and management to administrative and professional employees—as well as on transportation security and the passenger experience. To achieve the priorities reflected within the FY 2024 President's Budget, we will continue to engage with industry and stakeholders, invest resources in our employees and technology, and encourage the public to be part of the

solution. Finally, through constructive oversight and dialogue, we seek to continue to partner with Congress as we work to secure all modes of transportation for the public.

Chairman Gimenez, Ranking Member Thanedar, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I strongly believe that the TSA priorities outlined in the FY 2024 President's Budget are not only necessary but timely and vital to our economy. As always, we will be very responsive to addressing any questions that you might have throughout this budget process and I look forward to this discussion and your questions. Thank you.