

STATE AND LOCAL PERSPECTIVES ON DHS PREPAREDNESS GRANT PROGRAMS

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE, AND RECOVERY

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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STATE AND LOCAL PERSPECTIVES ON DHS PREPAREDNESS GRANT PROGRAMS

Wednesday, April 28, 2021

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS,
RESPONSE, AND RECOVERY,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 12:07 p.m., via Webex, Hon. Val Butler Demings [Chairwoman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Demings, Jackson Lee, Payne, Watson Coleman, Cammack, Higgins, and Miller-Meeks.

Also present: Representative Thompson.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. The Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery will come to order. The subcommittee is meeting today to receive testimony on State and local perspectives on DHS preparedness grant programs.

Without objection, the Chair is authorized to declare the subcommittee in recess at any point.

Let me officially say good afternoon to all of you. I would like to start by recognizing that this is my first Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Subcommittee hearing for the 117th Congress and my first hearing as Chair for the subcommittee.

I am pleased to be joined by my colleague and fellow Floridian, Ranking Member Kate Cammack. We both hail from a State that has experienced many natural disasters. We can attest to the importance of emergency preparedness and use our experiences to conduct meaningful oversight of the Department of Homeland Security.

We are here today to discuss the Department of Homeland Security's preparedness grant programs. These grant programs were created following one of the Nation's darkest moments, the September 11 terrorist attacks. We all remember that tragic day that took the lives of so many. I was assigned to the Orlando International Airport as a police commander in charge of the police division of the Orlando Police Department at that time. We learned many lessons that day, and the months and years to follow, about our readiness to respond to all threats.

Through the Homeland Security Grant Programs, the Department's premier grant suite, DHS has made important investments to elevate the Nation's homeland security posture. These programs provide Federal assistance to fill gaps related to State, local, Trib-

al, and territorial governments' ability to effectively prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate terrorist attacks.

This is especially so for the Urban Area Security Initiative, the UASI Program and the State Homeland Security Grant Program, programs States rely on to build and maintain critical infrastructure and capabilities to keep our communities, our States, and our Nation safe. UASI funding is particularly critical to the Congressional district I represent, Florida 10, with central Florida being home to millions of domestic and international tourist destinations, including world renowned theme parks and attractions, it is essential that our first responders have the training, equipment, and other resources needed to perform their job during the most challenging times.

Presently, Orlando's strong security posture is due in part to UASI funding that has helped to provide first responders with the tools and training they need to fulfill their primary mission, to keep our residents and visitors to our region safe.

Having served as a law enforcement officer for almost 3 decades, I understand the tough job of our first responders, police and fire and others, and believe in the importance of continued robust Federal support for grant programs that assist them in their work.

President Trump consistently proposed significant cuts to the DHS preparedness grant programs that if enacted would have resulted in the tremendous loss of important homeland security capabilities that this country has invested in for years. Thankfully, Congress worked to ensure that cuts to these programs did not take place, but rather enacted increases in these programs.

I look forward to working with the Biden administration to ensure that DHS preparedness grant programs continue to maintain robust funding, enabling us to meet the moment and boldly respond to any threat facing our Nation. In the nearly 20 years since the September 11 terrorist attack, the threats against our Nation are ever-present, but we now see additional threats that were not as prevalent when the preparedness grant program was first established. Rather than foreign radical extremism being the predominant threat, it is now domestic terrorism, a fact evidenced by the January 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

Unfortunately, this rise in domestic terrorism has also put non-profit organizations at risk, prompting them to struggle to secure their facilities with extremely tight budgets, and underscoring the need for them to have access to DHS funding.

I would like to commend Chairman Thompson on the critical work he has done to help secure nonprofit organizations from terrorist attacks through the Securing American Non-profit Organizations Against Terrorist Act, which is now a law.

While the evolution of the threat landscape requires DHS preparedness grant programs to evolve with it, it is important that stakeholder perspectives are considered and incorporated into changes to the grant program, including changes DHS made in the fiscal year 2020 and fiscal year 2021 budgets.

I am pleased that the Department has the interest in ensuring preparedness dollars are spent how and where they are needed most and that Secretary Mayorkas has acknowledged the need to assess how these grant programs can be improved.

While I look forward to working with the Biden administration to improve the grant programs, it is also the role of this subcommittee through its oversight function to hold them accountable. I am pleased that we have a simple—this expert panel of stakeholders to assist us in that effort.

I look forward to your testimony today about how grant programs are used to strengthen your communities, the effect of the recent changes to the programs in fiscal year 2020 and 2021, and the future of the grant programs.

[The statement of Chairwoman Demings follows:]

STATEMENT OF CHAIRWOMAN VAL BUTLER DEMINGS

APRIL 28, 2021

We are here today to discuss the Department of Homeland Security's preparedness grant programs. These grant programs were created following one of the Nation's darkest moments, the September 11 terrorist attacks.

Through the Homeland Security Grant Program, the Department's premier grants suite, DHS has made important investments to elevate the Nation's homeland security posture. These programs provide Federal assistance to fill gaps related to State, local, Tribal, and territorial governments' ability to effectively prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate against terrorist attacks. This is especially so with the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) Program and the State Homeland Security Grant Program, the DHS programs States rely on to build and maintain critical capabilities used to make and keep this country safe.

UASI funding is particularly critical to the Congressional district I represent, Florida's 10th. With Orlando being home to many international tourist destinations, including world-renown theme parks and attractions, it is essential that our first responders be adequately equipped. Presently, Orlando's security strong posture is due in large part to UASI funding that has helped to provide first responders with the tools and training they need to do their jobs safely and effectively.

Having served as a law enforcement officer for 27 years, I understand the tough job of first responders, and believe in the importance of continued, robust Federal support for grant programs that assist them in their work. President Trump consistently proposed significant cuts to the DHS preparedness grant programs that, if enacted, would have resulted in the tremendous loss of important homeland security capabilities that this country has invested in for years. Thankfully, Congress worked to ensure that cuts to these programs did not take place, but rather enacted increases to these programs.

I look forward to working with the Biden administration to ensure that DHS preparedness grant programs continue to maintain robust funding and are responsive to all threats facing this Nation.

In the nearly 20 years since the September 11 terrorist attacks, the threat environment in this country has evolved, and the risks we now face are different from when the preparedness grant programs were first established. Rather than foreign radical extremism being the predominant threat, it is now domestic terrorism—a fact evidenced by the January 6 insurrection at the United States Capitol.

Unfortunately, this rise in domestic terrorism has also put nonprofit organizations at great risk, prompting them to struggle to secure their facilities with extremely tight budgets and underscoring the need for them to have access to DHS funding.

I would like to commend Chairman Thompson on the good work he has done to help secure nonprofit organizations from terrorist attacks through the Securing American Nonprofit Organizations Against Terrorism Act, which is now law. While the evolution of the threat landscape requires DHS preparedness grant programs to evolve with it, it is important that stakeholder perspectives are considered and incorporated into changes to the grant programs, including changes DHS made in fiscal year 2020 and fiscal year 2021.

I am pleased that the Department has an interest in ensuring preparedness grant dollars are spent how and where they are needed most, and that Secretary Mayorkas has acknowledged the need to assess how these grant programs could be improved. While I look forward to working with the Biden administration to improve the grant programs, it is also the role of this subcommittee, through its oversight function, to ensure they are getting it right. I am pleased that we have assembled this expert panel of stakeholders to assist us in that effort.

I look forward to engaging with you today on how DHS preparedness grant programs are used to strengthen your communities, the recent changes made to the programs in fiscal year 2020 and fiscal year 2021, and the future of the grant programs.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. It is now my pleasure to recognize the Ranking Member of this subcommittee, the gentlewoman from the great State of Florida, Ms. Cammack, for an opening statement.

Ms. CAMMACK. Thank you to my fellow Floridian and Chairwoman, Val Demings.

It is a very exciting time for us to be hosting our very first subcommittee hearing. I think this is historic that we have 2 Floridian women that are spearheading this subcommittee. So, I look very much forward to working with you.

As we all know, this year marks the 20th anniversary of September 11, the worst terrorist attack on American soil. As our Nation watched the events of that date unfold, we saw first-hand the countless emergency responders who rushed toward the danger without a second thought, risking their lives, and sadly many made the ultimate sacrifice to save the lives of others. That tragic day in 2001 highlighted the invaluable role that first responders play in communities all across America.

From responding to major terrorist attacks and detection of weapons of mass destruction, to security screening operations and fire suppression activities, we rely on our first responders to keep us safe each and every day. FEMA's preparedness grants provide State, local, Tribal, and territorial governments the ability to build, sustain, and improve capabilities necessary to prepare for and protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate hazards at the local levels. Preparedness grant dollars enable the funding of necessary training exercises, information sharing initiatives, community awareness campaigns, and the purchasing of vital equipment, among other items.

In my home State of Florida, Urban Area Security Initiative grants funded a boat for the Tampa Police Department to regularly conduct patrols within the Port of Tampa Bay to increase port security and deter criminal and terrorist activity. I have myself witnessed this equipment in action and it is truly a necessity to keep our communities safe.

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement conducted a grant-funded State-wide cyber training for IT security managers and high-tech crime investigators to help determine the effectiveness of their information security defenses. In 2019 State Homeland Security Grant Program funds were spent to purchase anti-vehicle barriers as a pilot project for Florida's Northeast Regional Domestic Security Task Force. Port Security grant program funds were utilized by Florida law enforcement to attend the Maritime Tactical Operations Training Program at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, also known as FLETC, where they learned tactical boarding procedures, tactical water survival, and vessel clearing and shooting from an unstable platform. In a State like Florida, with 14 deep-water ports, it is critical that this training is readily available for all of our first responders.

Bringing it a little bit closer to home, my husband Matt is a firefighter, paramedic, and SWAT medic. The Assistance to Firefighter

Grants, ASG, has provided financial assistance directly to eligible firefighter departments, such as his, emergency medical service, EMS, organizations, and State fire training academies for critical training and equipment. The ASG program enhances response capabilities to more effectively protect the health and safety of our first responders and the public with respect to fire and fire-related hazards.

The importance of these grant programs cannot be understated. However, as the threat environment changes, it is important that these grant systems evolve and adapt to emerging challenges and become more responsive to the needs of first responders and our local communities.

It has come to my attention through daily interactions with first responders in my district that grant monies are often times not allowed to fund essential equipment necessary to keep our local first responders safe. As new technology becomes available it is important that allowable uses of these funds remain flexible to best serve these everyday heroes.

Furthermore, I think it is important that these grant programs, and applying to receive funds, is more accessible and “user-friendly” for smaller and more rural emergency responder departments. The threats that our communities face is wide-spread and not everyone has available resources to staff solely dedicated to the—staff the dedicated process of the grant application process.

We must ensure that all of our first responders have the tools they need to get the job done and to keep us safe. Preparedness grants that support our States, urban areas, ports, transit systems, fire services, and non-profits are crucial to maintaining capabilities, providing training, and purchasing equipment for the overall protection of our communities and way of life. I am proud to support these programs that strengthen our Nation’s overall emergency preparedness postures.

Thank you very much to my colleague, Chairwoman Demings, for holding this important hearing today. I very much look forward to hearing from our witnesses on the necessity of these grant programs and how we can better support these initiatives. We need to continue to enhance the critical safety and security initiatives to keep our communities safe.

So I look forward to the recommendations to improve the grants going forward. Thank you to all our witnesses again for your testimony here today.

With that, I yield back.

[The statement of Ranking Member Cammack follows:]

STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER KAT CAMMACK

APRIL 28, 2021

This year marks the 20th anniversary of September 11—the worst terrorist attack on American soil. As our Nation watched the events of that date unfold, we saw first-hand the countless emergency responders who rushed toward the danger without a second thought, risked their lives, and sadly many made the ultimate sacrifice to save the lives of others.

That tragic day in 2001 highlighted the invaluable role that first responders play in communities across America. From responding to major terrorist attacks and detection of weapons of mass destruction to security screening operations and fire suppression activities, we rely on first responders to keep us safe each and every day.

FEMA's preparedness grants provide State, local, Tribal, and territorial governments the ability to build, sustain, and improve capabilities to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards at the local level.

Preparedness grant dollars enable the funding of necessary training, exercises, information-sharing initiatives, community awareness campaigns, and the purchasing of vital equipment, among other items.

In my home State of Florida, Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grants funded a boat for the Tampa Police Department to regularly conduct patrols within Port Tampa Bay to increase port security and deter criminal or terrorist activity.

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement conducted a grant-funded State-wide cyber training for IT security managers and high-tech crime investigators to help determine the effectiveness of their information security defenses.

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Port Security Grant Program funds were utilized by Florida law enforcement to attend the Maritime Tactical Operations Training Program at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) where they learned tactical boarding procedures, tactical water survival, and vessel clearing and shooting from an unstable platform.

A little closer to home—my husband is a Firefighter/Paramedic & SWAT Medic—the Assistance to Firefighter Grants (AFG) provide financial assistance directly to eligible fire departments, emergency medical service (EMS) organizations, and State Fire Training Academies for critical training and equipment.

The AFG program enhances response capabilities to more effectively protect the health and safety of first responders and the public with respect to fire and fire-related hazards.

The importance of these grant programs cannot be understated. However, as the threat environment changes, it is important that these grant systems evolve and adapt to emerging challenges and become more responsive to the needs of first responders and local needs.

It has come to my attention through daily interactions with first responders in my District, that grant monies are oftentimes not allowed to fund essential equipment necessary to keep our local first responders safe. As new technology becomes available, it is important that allowable uses of these funds remains flexible to best serve these everyday heroes.

Furthermore, I think it is important that these grant programs and applying to receive funds is more accessible and "user-friendly" for smaller or more rural emergency responder departments. The threats that our communities face is wide-spread and not everybody has the available resources to have staff solely dedicated to the grant application process. We must ensure all our first responders have the tools they need to get the job done and keep us safe.

Preparedness grants that support our States, urban areas, ports, transit systems, fire services, and non-profits are crucial to maintaining capabilities, providing training, and purchasing equipment for the overall protection of our communities and way of life. I am proud to support these programs that strengthen our Nation's overall emergency preparedness posture.

Thank you to my colleague, Chairwoman Demings for holding this important hearing today and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on the necessity of these grant programs, how they've supported and continue to enhance critical safety and security initiatives, and any recommendations to improve the grants going forward.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. The Chair thanks the Ranking Member.

Members are also reminded that the committees will operate according to the guidelines laid out by the Chairman and Ranking Member regarding remote procedures.

Without objection, Members not on the subcommittee shall be permitted to sit and question the witnesses.

It is now the Chair's pleasure to recognize the Chairman of the full committee, the gentleman from Mississippi, Mr. Thompson, for an opening statement.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Let me say before I give my formal talk how happy I am that the 2 ladies from Florida are running the show. You both are doing a

wonderful job and Florida could not be better represented by the 2 of you.

So let me formally thank you as subcommittee Chair and Ranking Member for holding today's hearing on the Department of Homeland Security's preparedness grant. The committee has always prioritized oversight of Homeland Security Grants and I am glad that the subcommittee is starting this Congress with such a critical hearing.

The Homeland Security Grant Program, also commonly referred to as Preparedness Grants, was created nearly 20 years ago after the September 11 terrorist attack to fill gaps in our National emergency preparedness.

It was apparent the Federal Government needed to do more work to provide critical resources directly to our first responders and State and local government, which is why Congress created the State Homeland Security Program and Urban Area Security Initiative Program, along with other grant programs. These programs have proven to be critical resources over the last 2 decades. While State and local governments have made great strides in their preparedness capabilities, we must recognize that the threat landscape is ever-evolving and the threats we now face have expanded considerably, to include rising incidents of domestic terrorism to cyber attacks. As the threats to our Nation continue to evolve, so too must the Homeland Security Preparedness Grant Program.

Nearly 20 years ago we focused our grants primarily on combating terrorism from abroad. Now, some of the most dangerous threats we face as a Nation are home-grown, lone offenders, and small groups of individuals who commit acts of violence motivated by domestic extremist ideological benefits.

In fact, in recent years houses of worship and other non-profits have been targets of violence. That is why I was pleased when my bill, the American Non-Profit Organizations against Terrorism Act, was signed into law last year. The law authorized critical grant funding to non-profits and faith-based organizations to help secure their facilities against terrorist attacks.

I am glad that former President Trump's proposed cuts to existing preparedness grants funding failed due to bipartisan opposition from Member of Congress. Those cuts, if enacted, would have been devastating for our Nation and would have hindered our ability to keep America safe.

I hope to hear from our witnesses today about how DHS grants have aided them as they make their communities safer and how we can ensure the grant programs best secure our States and cities from terrorist threats.

I look forward to working with the Biden administration and my colleagues and continue to support communities in the fight of all forms of terrorism in our homeland.

Thank you, Madam Chair, and I yield back.

[The statement of Chairman Thompson follows:]

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN BENNIE G. THOMPSON

APRIL 28, 2021

The committee has always prioritized oversight of homeland security grants, and I am glad that the subcommittee is starting this Congress with such a critical hearing.

The homeland security grant programs, also commonly referred to as preparedness grants, were created nearly 20 years ago after the September 11 terrorist attacks revealed gaps in our Nation's emergency preparedness. It was apparent the Federal Government needed to do more to provide critical resources directly to our first responders and State and local governments, which is why Congress created the State Homeland Security Program and Urban Area Security Initiative Program, along with other grant programs. These programs have proven to be critical resources over the last 2 decades.

While State and local governments have made great strides in their preparedness capabilities, we must recognize that the threat landscape is ever-evolving and the threats we now face have expanded considerably to include rising incidents of domestic terrorism to cyber attacks. As the threats to our Nation continue to evolve, so too must the homeland security preparedness grant programs.

Nearly 20 years ago, we focused our grant efforts primarily on combating terrorism from abroad. Now, some of the most dangerous threats we face as a Nation are home-grown, lone offenders, and small groups of individuals who commit acts of violence motivated by domestic extremist ideological beliefs. In fact, in recent years, houses of worship and other nonprofits have been targets of violence. This is why I was pleased when my bill, the "American Nonprofit Organizations Against Terrorism Act," was signed into law last year. The law authorizes critical grant funding to nonprofits and faith-based organizations to help secure their facilities against terrorist attacks.

I am glad that former President Trump's proposed cuts to existing preparedness grant funding failed due to bipartisan opposition from Members of Congress. Those cuts, if enacted, would have been devastating for our Nation and would have hindered our ability to keep America safe.

I hope to hear from our witnesses today about how DHS grants have aided them as they make their communities safer and how we can ensure the grant programs best secure our States and cities from terrorist threats. I look forward to working with the Biden administration and my colleagues in continuing to support communities in the fight against all forms of terrorism in our homeland.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. Thank you so much to our Chairman.

It is now my pleasure to welcome our panel of witnesses.

Our first witness is Hawaii Governor David Ige, appearing on behalf of the National Governors Association. Governor Ige was sworn in as the eighth Governor of the State of Hawaii on December 1, 2014. Prior to becoming Governor, he served in the Hawaii legislature for almost 30 years. Before that Governor Ige had a career as an electrical engineer and a project manager.

Our second witness is the director of New Jersey's Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, Jared Maples. Mr. Maples has served in that capacity since 2017 and served as the Federally-designed Homeland Security Advisor to the Governor, in addition to serving as the cabinet-level executive responsible for coordinating and leading New Jersey's counterterrorism, cybersecurity, and emergency preparedness efforts.

Mr. Maples has testified before the subcommittee on multiple occasions, and I want to thank him for again being willing to provide us with his insight on these very important topics.

Our third witness, certainly no stranger to me, the chief of the Orlando Police Department, Orlando Rolón. He is appearing on behalf of the Major Cities Chief Association. Chief Rolón started with the Orlando Police Department in 1992. Having previously served with him while I was in his position, I am well aware of what a dedicated public servant he is.

Chief Rolón, it is great to have you with us. I know your testimony will be invaluable for this subcommittee. Thank you.

Finally, I understand that Ranking Member Cammack would like to introduce our final witness, battalion chief of Ocala Fire Rescue, Robert Altman.

Ms. CAMMACK. Thank you, Chairwoman Demings.

I am very, very proud to introduce today a constituent of mine, Mr. Robert Altman. Mr. Altman is a 31-year veteran of Ocala Fire Rescue. After serving as captain for 18 years, Mr. Altman was promoted to battalion chief in 2019. Throughout his career with Ocala Fire Rescue Mr. Altman has played integral roles with special operations and urban search and rescue teams, responding to numerous disasters.

As a member of the International Association of Firefighters, Mr. Altman was selected to participate in the peer review process for FEMA's Assistance to Firefighters Grants Program, or AFG, as we all know them, where I am sure the knowledge that he has gained from his extensive career is very welcome and appreciated here today, as he has helped review thousands of applications.

I really appreciate Mr. Altman for his continued service to our community and I am so pleased that he is able to testify here today and represent the Gator Nation—I had to throw that in there.

So thank you, Rob. Appreciate you.

With that, I yield back.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. Thank you so much Ranking Member, and thank you so much, Chief Altman, for being with us today. That comes from a Florida State Seminole.

Without objection, the witnesses' full statements will be inserted in the record.

I now ask each witness to summarize their statements for 5 minutes, beginning with Governor Ige.

Governor.

STATEMENT OF HONORABLE DAVID Y. IGE, GOVERNOR, STATE OF HAWAII

Governor IGE. Good morning and aloha from Hawaii. Thank you so much, Chairwoman Demings, Chairman Thompson, and Ranking Member Cammack for this opportunity.

I am representing the National Governor's Association, the bipartisan voice of the Nation's Governors, comprising the 55 States, territories, and commonwealths. Where appropriate, I will also add my perspective as Governor of the State of Hawaii.

Now, for example, we learned much in 2018 as we concurrently responded to and managed the recovery from the Kilauea eruption and the wettest tropical cycle ever recorded in Hawaii and the Nation. We are still dealing with the unique challenges our island State faces from the COVID-19 pandemic.

My testimony will focus on 4 main areas, cybersecurity, FEMA programs, preventing targeted violence, and COVID-19 challenges and lessons learned. My written testimony provides additional information in each of these areas.

First, I would like to discuss cybersecurity. As former co-chairman of the Council on Governors, a bipartisan group of Governors that work with the administration on key National security issues,

I worked with my peers and Federal partners from the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Defense, and the White House on several cyber initiatives over the past 2 years. One area that needs continued work is addressing the complexity of authorities related to cybersecurity.

Specifically, Governors have asked DHS and DoD to better define the roles and responsibilities at the Federal level related to response efforts during a cybersecurity event. In addition, the NGA has called on Congress to create a dedicated State and local cybersecurity grant program. Finally, we strongly urge Congress to include cybersecurity in any National infrastructure plan or legislative package.

With respect to FEMA programs, Governors must prepare for, respond to, and recover from man-made and increased occurrences of catastrophic natural disasters. Much of our ability to do this comes through the FEMA grant funding. Governors remain concerned that current funding levels are insufficient. On-going dedicated Federal support is crucial.

Another area of concern is that FEMA's preparedness grants prescribe where 20 percent of the funding must go. Governors have concern that continued carve-outs hurt overall efforts. We look forward to working with DHS Secretary Mayorkas on this issue.

I also want to note NGA's concerns about FEMA's proposed rule titled "Cost of Assistance Estimates in Disaster Declaration Process for the Public Assistance Program". The time and manner in which these changes have been proposed will unduly burden State, territorial, and local governments as they continue responding to and recovering from disasters, both COVID- and non-COVID-related.

Combatting the rise in domestic violent extremism and preventing acts of targeted violence are serious issues. Through a 2-year grant from the Department of Homeland Security, the NGA worked with 5 States to develop State-wide multi-disciplinary strategies to prevent targeted violence. With NGA's guidance, Hawaii created a multi-disciplinary team focused on education and we plan to establish a threat assessment team focused on health care infrastructure.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution, but the work done by the NGA center is a great starting point and resource for decision makers at both the State and Federal level.

I will conclude with these observations and lessons learned from COVID-19. During COVID 2 key issues arose within FEMA and DHS for Governors, eligibility for under public assistance and a Federal-State cost share requirements. Written testimony details the challenges we have experienced in these areas and I want to focus on our recommendations.

Federal funding needs to be immediate, accessible, and flexible enough to address emerging needs for critical materials during this on-going crisis. In addition, NGA calls for a simplification of the public assistance eligibility requirements to ensure efficiency and simplicity. The work and service of the National Guard has been critical this past year and NGA has called for a review of a legislative solution for the use of Title 32 for large-scale disasters and pandemics.

In addition, the FEMA mission assignment process should be reviewed to ensure a better-coordinated, streamlined, and rapid responsive system.

Thank you so much for this opportunity to share with you.

Aloha.

[The prepared statement of Governor Ige follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DAVID Y. IGE

APRIL 28, 2021

Good morning, thank you, Chairwoman Demings and Ranking Member Cammack, for holding this hearing and inviting me to speak today.

I am here representing the National Governors Association (NGA), the bipartisan voice of the Nation's Governors, comprising the 55 States, territories, and commonwealths. Through NGA, Governors and their policy advisors share best practices, speak with an informed voice on National policy and develop innovative solutions that improve citizens' lives through State government and support the principles of Federalism.

Where appropriate, I will also provide my perspective as Governor of Hawai'i. My State has a diverse perspective on preparedness and disasters learned from events such as earthquakes to volcanic eruptions to unique challenges from COVID-19 as an island State.

We as a State have had to learn to manage the response and recovery process concurrently as we continue to manage the recovery from the Kilauea eruption and the response to the COVID-19 pandemic which has left us with one of the highest unemployment rates in the Nation.

There is a lot to discuss with regards to the Department of Homeland Security but in my testimony today I will highlight key themes and considerations in 4 main areas:

- Cybersecurity
- FEMA Programs to include grants and regulations
- Preventing targeted violence
- COVID-19 challenges and lessons learned.

CYBERSECURITY

First, I would like to discuss a few areas within cybersecurity that Governors and our policy advisors have raised as concerns and opportunities for State, territorial, and Federal Governments.

Federal Roles, Responsibilities, and Capabilities

As former co-chair of the Presidentially-appointed Council of Governors, a bipartisan group of Governors that work with the administration on key National security issues, I worked with my peers and Federal partners from the Department of Homeland Security (OHS), the Department of Defense (DOD), and the White House on several cyber initiatives over the past 2 years.

One area that needs continued work is addressing the complexity of authorities related to cybersecurity, specifically in dealing with critical infrastructure and the resources available to a State or territory during a cyber event.

Specifically, Governors asked DHS and DOD to better define the roles and responsibilities at the Federal level related to cybersecurity response efforts. Governors need a more detailed and up-to-date summary—beyond the 2016 National Cyber Incident Response Plan noted as a resource by our Federal partners. This also should include an overview of what the whole-of-Government cyber response plan in the case of a catastrophic cyber event looks like.

We believe this will afford States and territories a better idea of what resources are available to us in the event of a cyber incident as well as help to develop a process to request and receive assets where appropriate. A better understanding of the Federal roles and responsibilities will also help State, territorial, and the Federal Government with better and timely information sharing.

And finally, over the past year-and-a-half, the Hawai'i National Guard, along with Ohio and Washington, participated in a Cyber Mission Assurance Team (CMAT) pilot program. The 10-person CMAT performed comprehensive mission/risk analysis, vulnerability assessments, and facilitated information sharing. The proof of concept is being reviewed by the National Guard Bureau; however, I believe that CMAT or a similar capability should be provided in each of the States, territories, and com-

monwealths. I believe this capability will augment OHS cyber capabilities throughout the Nation.

Dedicated Funding

For several years, NGA has called on Congress to strengthen the Nation's cybersecurity posture through the creation of a dedicated State, territorial, and local cybersecurity grant program.

We believe that a fully funded and dedicated cybersecurity program can help States, territories, and localities develop and implement innovative and effective cybersecurity practices to include remote work; help to build resources and capabilities; better identify, protect against, and detect cyber threats; and help to enhance partnerships among different levels of government, including local partners.

Cybersecurity is the No. 1 growing threat to the Nation's critical infrastructure. This is especially concerning for the State of Hawai'i as the largest combatant command with all its service components reside in the Island of Oahu. A cyber attack could against Hawai'i's critical infrastructure could impact USINDOPACOM's mission assurance.

Over the past 2 years, both the Trump and Biden administrations have tried to better prioritize cybersecurity investment via carve-outs in FEMA grant programs. We appreciate and share DHS's renewed focus on cybersecurity to include resiliency, workforce development, modernized systems, and collaboration. But, to accomplish this fully, Governors believe that carve-outs can only go so far; dedicated funds that incentivize economies of scale are needed to be most effective.

COVID-19, along with several high-profile cyber intrusions, such as SolarWinds, Microsoft Exchange, and the 2015 Office of Personnel Management (OPM) data breach, revealed that the Nation needs to address cybersecurity and IT infrastructure resilience comprehensively.

Reliance on State, territorial, and local networks during the pandemic has increased the risk of vulnerabilities and gaps. This surge on our information technology infrastructure—to include administering large and diverse Federal funds across State, territorial, and local governments—requires additional investment in both funding and manpower to keep up with the massive usage.

Cybersecurity, and ensuring the availability and reliability of IT infrastructure, is a critical component of our infrastructure. Therefore, Congress must recognize that cybersecurity is an important piece of any National infrastructure plan or infrastructure legislative package.

FEMA PROGRAMS—GRANTS AND REGULATIONS

With the constantly-evolving landscape of man-made disasters and increased occurrences of catastrophic natural disasters, Governors must maintain and continually update strategies to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies.

Leveraging resources, strengthening coordination, and improving information sharing between Federal, State, territorial, and local authorities remain critical to addressing challenges and meeting the homeland security and public safety needs of our States, territories, and the Nation. Federal partnership through the Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) are critical to these efforts.

Much of our ability to do this comes through FEMA grant funding, which we leverage to develop and sustain critical capabilities such as intelligence, fusion centers, State-wide interoperable emergency communications, specialized regional response teams, threat assessments, and cybersecurity initiatives.

However, Governors remain concerned that current funding levels for these programs are not sufficient and make it difficult to sustain core capabilities, invest in innovative approaches, and ensure flexibility to adjust to emerging threats. States and territories have continued to respond efficiently to disasters; however, States and territories cannot maintain the status quo indefinitely, and COVID-19 has highlighted the gaps that exist when facing prolonged and concurrent crises. Territories are further limited in their response to both COVID-19 and new emergencies due to their unequal treatment under Federal programs, the fragility of their health care infrastructure, and having been impacted by severe natural disasters in recent years.

COVID-19-related strain has demonstrated many areas of under investment in Hawai'i's IT infrastructure, from our unemployment insurance system, which was quickly overwhelmed and vulnerable to fraud, to broadband access in rural areas as the Department of Education tried to continue to care for our students through remote learning.

On-going, dedicated Federal support is crucial to ensure States, territories, and localities have sufficient capacity to handle more routine disasters as well as scale for catastrophic events. Governors believe Federal funding provided to States and territories should focus on developing or enhancing common core capabilities and support efforts to measure the effectiveness of grant funds in building and maintaining preparedness and response capabilities.

National Priorities

As you know, last year the Trump administration undertook efforts to reprioritize investments in homeland security through the establishment of National Priorities for FEMA's preparedness grants. This was done by prescribing where 20 percent of the funding must go.

While we agreed with the focus on the core priorities defined by the DHS, Governors and our homeland security and emergency management advisors have concerns that continued carve-outs hurt overall efforts. NGA and our coalition partners noted to the Trump administration 2 key issues for consideration:

- A delay of 1 year to account for the on-going COVID-19 pandemic and to allow States, territories, and localities the ability to focus on this mission rather than rethinking their grant applications, and
- Work with stakeholders across all levels of government to adequately prepare for and implement new changes in advance of formal notices of funding opportunities.

However, the administration moved forward with the new requirements.

This year, the Biden administration increased the minimum amount each State must spend on specific interest areas from 20 to 30 percent of the total grant award.

As you know, threats and challenges are only growing across the country. There are only so many ways you can divvy up funding before there is little left to use for innovative and new approaches. In some instances, smaller jurisdictions may go with less effective methods to avoid being questioned on their spending. Furthermore, by prescribing amounts to be spent on specific activities, previous investments for the same efforts could result in duplicative spending and detract from other efforts and priorities under way in the State or territory.

We can all agree that our investments should be tailored to threats and needs, but not at the expense of other programs or investments already made.

It is critical for the Department to provide timely guidance and transparency in the decision-making process. We are pleased to see that the DHS Secretary Mayorkas has identified grant programs as an area for engagement next year, and Governors look forward to working with the Department in these efforts.

As chief executive officers of our States, ensuring the safety and security of citizens is one of the paramount duties and these Federal funding streams are a critical component of achieving that end. We encourage Congress and the administration to work with us on any reforms.

Public Assistance Regulations

I also wanted to note to the committee concerns NGA and our partners raised with FEMA's proposed rule titled "Cost of Assistance Estimates in the Disaster Declaration Process for the Public Assistance Program."

While we understand the need for FEMA to periodically review disaster policy, we believe the time and manner in which these changes have been proposed will unduly burden State, territorial, and local governments as they continue responding to and recovering from disasters, both COVID- and non-COVID-related.

In a coalition letter to FEMA, we noted our concerns with the proposed rule. We believe that raising the threshold for Public Assistance (PA) will inadvertently reduce mitigation and resilience funding and other Federal programs. Furthermore, we believe that utilizing the Total Taxable Resources (TTR) metric is inherently inequitable as it does not reflect the reality of a State's ability to tax those actual resources.

Our letter provided several recommendations for FEMA to consider, to include:

- Limiting adverse impacts to States, territories, and localities by using a phased-in approach over a long period of time when considering an adjustment to the per capita indicator.
- Creating a standardized method for weighing localized impacts and ensure States and territories have insight as to how FEMA applies their evaluation and recommendation to the President, and
- Reevaluating the size and scope of FEMA's response.

We encourage Congress to also consider our concerns should this proposed rule continue to move forward.

PREVENTING TARGETED VIOLENCE (PTV)

Combatting the rise in violent, domestic extremism and preventing acts of targeted violence are among the most serious issues each State and territory grapples with every day. I would like to briefly note the work of the National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) in this space.

In 2017, the NGA Center received a 2-year grant from the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention to support States', territories' and commonwealths' efforts to explore and develop multidisciplinary strategies to prevent targeted violence. NGA worked with 5 States during a policy academy that helped develop State-wide preventing targeted violence (PTV) strategies and action plans.

In continuation of its efforts to assist States and territories in developing prevention strategies, in January of this past year, the NGA Center released the *Governors' Roadmap to Preventing Targeted Violence*, which distills the latest research and draws from elements of public-health interventions to provide guidance to Governors, State, territorial and local leaders, and other stakeholders on how to prevent ideologically-inspired violence.

As Governors, this roadmap helps provides us with some best practices—such as leveraging our role as convener, executive, and administrator at key points in implementing targeted violence prevention, including strategy setting, program design, and securing community support.

As Governor of Hawai'i, I am dedicated to creating a safe State where everyone can thrive. Our remote geographic location makes it an imperative that we identify and mitigate threats early and prior to an incident. This requires a whole-of-community layered and multidisciplinary approach.

One of our innovations has been the formation of threat assessment teams, multidisciplinary teams that focus on specific aspects of targeted violence. The flagship team, Threat Team Oahu (TTO), an island-specific threat assessment team, has been highly effective in bringing together stakeholders and we are currently working to replicate its success with State-wide discipline-specific threat assessment teams.

We have already leveraged the lessons learned from TTO to create a multidisciplinary team focused on education, Threat Team EDU, aimed at preventing acts of targeted violence in throughout the State's educational institutions.

We are excited to continue to work with the NGA Center to improve and expand our programs and continue building State-wide discipline-specific threat assessment teams in the hopes of promoting increased information sharing and stronger situational awareness. Specifically, in collaboration with the NGA Center, Hawai'i plans to establish a threat assessment team focused on health care infrastructure.

Given the events over the past year, we know there is no one-size-fits-all solution. But the work done by the NGA Center is a great starting point and resource for decision makers at the State, territorial, and Federal levels.

COVID-19

I would like to conclude with observations and lessons learned from the COVID-19 experience. Governors continue to be on the front lines of the pandemic, and therefore we face a myriad of challenges from health preparedness to State and territory stabilization, but for today's hearing I will focus on areas within FEMA and DHS.

Public Assistance Eligibility and Cost Share

During COVID-19, 2 key issues arose for Governors—eligibility under public assistance and the State-Federal cost share requirements.

Early on, recognizing the unique and wide-spread impact of COVID-19 across the Nation, Governors made numerous requests to the Trump administration to authorize the increase of 100 percent Federal cost share for Major Disaster Declarations under FEMA. Unfortunately, this call went unanswered throughout 2020.

Along with the need for financial assistance, State and territories saw challenges with FEMA's Public Assistance guidance.

At the start, State and territories were getting inconsistent messaging across FEMA regions on what items were eligible for reimbursement. Some States had invested in funding for masks and disinfectants for schools, while other sought assistance with increased cost in operating 24-hour, 7-days-a-week emergency operations centers. This was compounded by challenges in locating and procuring PPE and health supplies due to a global supply shortage. Territories, as well as my own State, are especially vulnerable during disruptions in maritime commerce and supply chains due to their geographic location.

In August of last year, as rumors of forth-coming restrictive FEMA guidance began to circulate, NGA along with 7 of our partner State and local associations, called on FEMA not to limit the eligibility under Public Assistance and avoid any arbitrary distinctions between “response” and “reopening.” Unfortunately, the Trump administration chose a more restrictive policy, which caused greater confusion, frustration, and concern among State, territories, and localities.

Reasons such as these are why NGA and other associations supported H.R. 8266, the FEMA Assistance Relief Act last year, which would have adjusted the FEMA cost share as well as clarify and codify eligibility requirements for COVID-19 Major Disasters.

FEMA’s reimbursement process for disaster recovery is designed around rebuilding after wide-spread physical damage from a natural disaster, such as a hurricane. It is important to recognize that for COVID-19, States and territories are responding to an on-going and evolving public health crisis. That is why Federal funding, specifically FEMA funding, needs to be immediate, accessible, and flexible enough to address emerging needs for critical materials. Changing policy guidance makes it difficult to effectively plan and execute programs while ensuring good stewardship of taxpayer funding.

Governors truly appreciate the Biden administration’s willingness to address our calls for 100 percent Federal cost share early on, taking action on January 21 of this year to provide that support for emergency protective measures and the use of the National Guard dating back to the start of the pandemic, as well as expanding some public assistance eligibility.

However, several changes to policy guidance from FEMA since the start of the pandemic means that States and territories will have 3 different eligibility requirements based on arbitrary dates. These 3 eligibility windows will pose challenges to verifying duplication of benefits, untangling obligated funds, and will strain personnel at the State, territorial, and Federal level.

NGA calls for the simplification of the eligibility requirements from the start of the pandemic to ensure efficiency and simplicity and to ease the back-end paperwork and auditing process.

My State ran afoul of the changing guidance around purchases to support a safe environment in our public schools. This is compounded by the fact that as a smaller State we were forced to increase our order sizes to compete with States that had higher demand. This is now leading to issues as we work to manage the excess inventory.

National Guard

And finally, Governors would also like to recognize the work and service of our National Guard over the past year-and-a-half, not just during the pandemic but in response to a variety of domestic and overseas missions.

Specifically, to COVID-19, since the beginning of the pandemic, Governors called for the use of the National Guard, and the authorization of Title 32, which was granted and extended several times.

It is important for the committee and Congress to recognize that the lack of a formal process or guidance led to significant confusion and delays, especially at the start of the pandemic.

Even more concerning was the requirement that States and territories fund 25 percent of the cost associated with a Federal duty status. Never have States and territories been required to fund a Federal duty status, let alone during such an unprecedented pandemic and economic struggle.

As noted earlier, we appreciate President Biden retroactively authorizing Title 32 at 100 percent Federal funding for the use of our National Guard, and the extension of this authority through September of this year.

During a crisis, Governors should be able to rely on the Federal Government to provide clear guidance and requirements; a well-understood and transparent process; and resources, all in a timely and realistic manner. This guidance should be consistent and applied in a transparent and equitable fashion.

This is why NGA has called for a review and a legislative solution for the use of Title 32 for large-scale disasters and pandemics. How Title 32 was utilized during COVID-19 also highlights challenges with the FEMA mission assignment process and utilization of the Disaster Relief Funds. This process should be reviewed by the committee to ensure a better coordinated, streamlined, rapid, and responsive system at the Federal level.

CONCLUSION

Again, I would like to thank the committee for inviting NGA to testify today on these critical issues. Governors across the country, and our staff, stand ready to

work with you and Members of Congress as you look to address challenges in the homeland security and disaster response arena, be it review of the Stafford Act or FEMA grant programs.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. Thank you so much, Governor Ige, for your testimony.

I now recognize Director Maples to summarize his statement for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF JARED M. MAPLES, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND PREPAREDNESS, STATE OF NEW JERSEY

Mr. MAPLES. Thank you, Chairwoman. Chairwoman Demings, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. It is an honor to speak with you and share the work my office is doing to keep our residents, visitors, and institutions of New Jersey safe, especially with regard to Homeland Security grants and emergency preparedness.

The New Jersey Office of Homeland Security on Preparedness, NJOHSP, is tasked with coordinating the State's counterterrorism, cybersecurity, and emergency preparedness efforts across all levels of government, law enforcement, non-profit organizations, and the private sector. As New Jersey faces complex security challenges driven by evolving threats, we know these threats neither start nor end at our State's borders.

Last year brought compounded challenges to our country. Like other States, we were not immune to the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. New Jersey is the most densely-populated State in the Nation, increasing the difficulty of containing a widespread respiratory virus. We took action necessary to slow the spread of COVID-19, bolster our hospital capabilities, and support our communities. As the fight continues, we remain appreciative for the Federal Government's support.

Since the beginning of the pandemic we witnessed humanity and kindness in our society. Unfortunately, on January 6 there was also an unacceptable attack on our democracy and its institutions resulting in the culmination of an existing domestic threat that has been pervasive in our country for some time.

New Jersey's analytical capabilities have focused on domestic extremism and the threat it presents. We were one of the first States in the Nation to sharpen focus on groups in the United States perpetuating extreme ideologies meant to motivate individuals to violent action. We observed that COVID-19 restrictions, disinformation, and misinformation would converge with the 2020 Presidential election and mounting civil unrest Nation-wide. Specifically, we saw domestic extremists, foreign terrorist organizations, and nation-state threat actors attempting to leverage disinformation to hinder economic recovery and vaccination efforts, fuel anti-Government sentiment, and spread false narratives to sow discord throughout the United States.

In response we increased our efforts, beginning in March 2020, to combat these inaccuracies and provide up-to-date information and guidance to the public. In September we released the threat assessment detailing how the convergence of COVID-19 pandemic,

civil unrest, and the Presidential election influenced the National threat landscape.

This year brings with it an unfortunate milestone for our Nation, the 20th anniversary of September 11, 2001. For the past 20 years the Homeland Security paradigm has evolved through proactive strategy and reactive operations. The focus on public safety remains the same, but tactics and strategies change with new lessons learned or priorities identified.

With the new administration we see policy adaptations that will affect State and local programs moving forward. Whereas as one administration may have stringent investment priorities for grants or risk-based jurisdictional awards, others broaden discretion and expand the risk-based jurisdictional grants.

Ultimately, we recognize that of us in this discipline are working toward the same goals and objectives. We encourage the administration and DHS to sharpen its focus on risk-based decision making as program priorities are developed. Through risk-informed processes, collaboration with State Homeland Security leaders on future mandated programs and grant allocations, which allow for advance planning to occur with new priorities, rather than waiting on an annual notice of funding opportunity and having only the application submission window to impart Federal planning priorities.

As a State with a high-risk urban area, we support the UASI program and welcome continued risk-informed decisions about funding allocations, priorities, and expansion of jurisdictions. We also appreciate the Federal Government's attempt to broaden resources provided into other programs, such as targeted violence prevention. Collaboration with the States will strengthen these programs and help inform where both financial and programmatic resources will be most efficiently invested.

Last, we recognize the threats in the cyber realm are both an end-target and a vector through which other consequences may manifest. It is why our preparedness posture focuses on integrative threats with a goal of agnostic consequence management.

With this approach in mind, we welcome conversations with DHS and about dedicated funding for prioritization about cybersecurity.

In conclusion, the last year has highlighted many of the challenges for which our Nation's preparedness must improve. Whether focusing supply chain resiliency, the criticality of functions that drive our markets and economy, or the services that support our way of life, we must constantly adapt. We have spent the last 4 years trying to position New Jersey for these evolutions.

In that vein, we applaud DHS's movement toward critical functions and away from a singular focus on infrastructure assets. We appreciate the sharpened focus on collective capabilities and priorities for the grant programs.

Chairwoman Demings, Ranking Member Cammack, and distinguished Members of the subcommittee, including Congressman Payne and Congresswoman Watson Coleman, are great champions and partners. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to your questions and yield back to the Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Maples follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JARED M. MAPLES

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 28, 2021

INTRODUCTION

Chairwoman Demings and Ranking Member Cammack, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. It is an honor to speak with you and share the work my office is doing to keep the residents, visitors, and institutions of New Jersey safe, especially with regard to homeland security grants and emergency preparedness.

The New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness (NJOHSP) is tasked with coordinating the State's counterterrorism, cybersecurity, and emergency preparedness efforts across all levels of government, law enforcement, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector. NJOHSP is charged with bolstering New Jersey's resources for counterterrorism, critical infrastructure protection, cybersecurity, preparedness, training, and Federal grants management.

New Jersey faces complex security challenges driven by evolving threats, but we know those threats neither start nor end at our State borders. In New Jersey, we pride ourselves on the partnerships we have developed and strengthened with our Federal, State, and local partners to address our shared domestic security. We recognize that our work is never complete, and continual improvement is the only way to succeed at protecting New Jersey and the country. While we provide details on our on-going efforts, be mindful that we always seek to improve our strategic approach on homeland security and preparedness.

I thank the committee for the opportunity to share our thoughts, discuss our challenges, and collaborate on future steps as we all work toward securing our homeland.

NJOHSP ACTIONS

Last year brought compounded challenges to our country and each individual State. New Jersey is the most densely populated State in the Nation, increasing the difficulty of containing a wide-spread respiratory virus. We took actions necessary to slow the spread of COVID-19, bolster our hospital capabilities, and support our communities. Like other States, we were not immune to the devastating effects of the pandemic; however, the work and dedication of our medical professionals remains immeasurable.

As the fight continues, we remain appreciative for the Federal Government's support. I encourage committee members to stay engaged with State governments to support short- and long-term response and recovery efforts focused on both medical response capabilities and economic recovery and growth.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, we witnessed humanity and kindness in our society. Unfortunately, there was also an unacceptable attack on our democracy and its institutions. The events of January 6 were the culmination of an existing domestic threat that has been pervasive in our country for some time. These criminal acts were attempts to stop the orderly business of our Government. New Jersey's analytical capabilities have focused on domestic extremism and the threat it presents. We were one of the first States in the Nation to sharpen focus on groups in the United States perpetuating extreme ideologies meant to motivate individuals to violent action. We have worked closely with partners within our State to prevent violence against individuals, groups, or government and community institutions. NJOHSP continuously assesses strategic and tactical trends concerning international and domestic extremist ideologies and organizations. We proactively collect, compile, and aggregate information to generate intelligence products, which are used to inform our law enforcement partners, the private sector, and the public on potential threats to the State, its residents, and visitors. Through these timely, accurate, relevant, and insightful assessments, we spearheaded efforts to remain ahead of the ever-changing threat landscape, especially as the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an environment unlike we have experienced before.

NJOHSP observed that COVID-19 restrictions, disinformation, and misinformation would converge with the 2020 Presidential election and mounting civil unrest Nation-wide. Specifically, we saw domestic extremists, foreign terrorist organizations, and nation-state threat actors attempting to leverage disinformation to hinder economic recovery and vaccination efforts, fuel anti-Government sentiment, and spread false narratives to sow discord throughout the United States. In response, NJOHSP increased its efforts beginning in March 2020 to combat these inaccuracies and provide up-to-date knowledge and guidance from trusted authorities to help navigate the sheer volume of inaccurate information.

In September, NJOHSP released its 2020–2021 Supplemental Threat Assessment, which detailed how the convergence of the COVID–19 pandemic, civil unrest, and 2020 Presidential election influenced the National threat landscape. The analysis highlighted how evolving security threats would continue to impact New Jersey and the United States for the remainder of 2020 and through 2021. The following predictive analysis was forecasted:

- The COVID–19 pandemic and polarizing sentiments surrounding its impact would worsen the convergence of the 2020 Presidential election and mounting civil unrest across the Nation.
- Domestic extremists—primarily anarchist, anti-Government, and racially motivated—would continue to manipulate National incidents such as the COVID–19 pandemic, the 2020 Presidential election, and civil unrest to further their agendas and remain a threat.
- Nation-state threat actors’ expanding disinformation campaigns that exploit COVID–19, election security, and civil unrest would persist into 2021 to exacerbate domestic tensions and challenge U.S. global credibility.
- Foreign terrorist organizations would continue to exploit COVID–19, Presidential election dissonance, and civil unrest to create conflict, inspire extremists to radicalize, and provoke home-grown violent extremists to conduct attacks.

As we all continue to address threats within our borders, we should work collaboratively to address root causes, prevent violence of any kind, eschew political opportunism, and respect the foundational rights upon which this country is built. No matter the ideology of the threat actors, violence against any individual is both wrong and criminal. Our laws are set by legislative bodies, and we have tools to combat the type of actions witnessed on January 6 through the current statutory constructs. We will continue to use those tools to prevent violence and punish perpetrators while respecting the rights of every individual to express their beliefs, opinions, and speech in a peaceful manner.

Not unlike years past, we have been faced with multiple diverse threat streams in this country. Recent natural and man-made incidents have shaped our actions this year and will continue to influence those to come. However, this year brings with it an unfortunate milestone for our Nation: The 20th anniversary of terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. For the past 20 years, the homeland security paradigm has evolved through proactive strategy and reactive regrets. The focus on public safety remains the same, but tactics and strategies change with new lessons learned or priorities identified. Through it all, some constants remain firmly in place, beginning with the obvious that neither man-made terrorist events nor natural disasters respect State borders. Collaboration is key and teamwork is foundational at all levels of government and with the business community and the public.

In New Jersey, we are immensely proud of our recent work and continue to embrace a whole-of-community approach to security, focusing on our communities of faith and business. NJOHSP’s Interfaith Advisory Council continues to be a model for the country in Government to faith-based community engagement. We foster open dialog and promote honest conversations in a collaborative approach to security with more than 3,500 members. We also recently launched the New Jersey Shield program, a collaborative effort with the New Jersey State Police and New Jersey’s intelligence fusion center. This program will enhance public-private partnerships by enabling true bilateral information and resource sharing. It connects our public safety personnel and private sector to each other and with the other global Shield jurisdictions in operation. It creates the mesh network of information and resources that has been a priority since that fateful day in September 2001.

Our efforts in New Jersey continue to focus on suspicious activity reporting that remains vital to law enforcement efforts. The New Jersey Suspicious Activity Reporting System, or NJSARS, is part of an on-going effort in New Jersey to increase threat reporting. NJSARS shares information from suspicious activity reports (SARs) with law enforcement partners throughout the State. It is also linked to the FBI’s National SAR system known as eGuardian, which partners with the Nationwide SAR Initiative to form a single repository accessible to thousands of law enforcement personnel and analysts Nation-wide. We collect and analyze over 1,000 SARs every year and immediately share all leads with the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force.

Our relationship with the FBI remains strong, and its dedicated team of professionals continues to support and inform our efforts. NJOHSP has recently taken a leading role in New Jersey to combat increasing counterintelligence threats. Since 2018, we have partnered with the FBI in following its Joint Terrorism Task Force model to create the Nation’s first Counterintelligence Joint Task Force. Members of this task force have worked diligently to mitigate threats presented by foreign state-

sponsored actors seeking to conduct intelligence operations in New Jersey. Threat actors have attempted to unlawfully acquire intellectual property and access sensitive information in furtherance of their countries' foreign policy and economic goals. These illegal activities pose security challenges to New Jersey, with the potential to become significant National security threats.

These and other programs have been foundational to the success we have realized in New Jersey. Their implementation is a direct result of the resources the Federal Government has provided. We remain appreciative for that assistance and collaboration as we move forward into new endeavors. Similarly, the Federal Government is changing some programmatic directions. With the new administration, we see the policy adaptations that will affect State and local programs moving forward. Whereas one administration may have stringent investment priorities for grants or fewer risk-based jurisdictional awards, others broaden discretion and expand the risk-based jurisdictional grants. Ultimately, we recognize that all of us in this discipline are working toward the same goals and objectives, just through different programmatic paths.

We recognize the need for and support the identification of priorities within the homeland security grant program. While each State has its own needs, we understand the importance of enterprise capability building across the Nation. NJOHSP serves as New Jersey's State Administrative Agency to administer homeland security grant funds provided by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) or the State of New Jersey. With this designation, NJOHSP is responsible for ensuring compliance with all the fiduciary and programmatic administration requirements of Federal and State homeland security grant programs designed to make New Jersey a safer place to live, visit, work, and worship. NJOHSP's administration and management of homeland security grant programs is built upon 3 foundational guiding principles: Inclusivity, transparency, and accountability. In an effort to establish clear guidelines for the allocation and distribution of discretionary funding, we follow 5 basic criteria when managing and administering Federal and State homeland security and preparedness grant funding:

- Follow a risk-based system—risk being defined as a function of threat, vulnerability, and consequence assessment.
- Significantly benefit New Jersey's emergency response community.
- Link to our State preparedness goals to prevent terrorist attacks, protect critical infrastructure, and reduce vulnerability to terrorism, mitigate terrorist attacks, respond to incidents of terrorism quickly and effectively, and recover from terrorist attacks in order to restore quality of life.
- Support the National and State priorities and core capabilities; e.g., interoperability, regionalization, and information sharing.
- Avoid duplication where wasteful.

To attain a more quantitative understanding of the risks that New Jersey faces and to better inform our investments of Federal and State homeland security funds for many of our strategic funding, planning, and preparedness programs, we divided the State into 4 planning and funding regions: Urban Areas Security Initiative Region (UASI), Northwest Region, Shore Region, and Delaware River Region. This regionalization approach facilitates a "bottom-up" planning framework, which informs a State-wide preparedness road map. At the State level, our Domestic Security Preparedness Task Force addresses both regional and State-wide preparedness capability initiatives.

While achieving the foundational guiding principles, several tangible outcomes have resulted that go well beyond grant management activities. None is greater than the profound sense of collaboration between both multiple levels of government (local, county, State, Federal) and various first responder communities (fire, emergency medical, law enforcement, emergency management services, etc.), as well as the build-out of public and private partnerships. Further, the Federal and State nonprofit security grant programs have brought greater understanding and collaboration between law enforcement professionals and houses of worship that results in greater detailed mitigation efforts against terrorism and acts of violence. Incredibly, it is the grant funding that brings together the "whole community" to address ongoing and emergent threats associated with terrorism.

To date, NJOHSP has administered over \$1.3 billion of grant funding and currently is responsible for over \$175 million in open Federal and State homeland security and preparedness grant funds. In 2018, a new State-funded grant program, the Nonprofit Security Grant Pilot Program, was established to assist eligible non-profit organizations in enhancing physical security with the funding of security personnel and target-hardening equipment. This program continues to grow in terms of interest and funding amounts. There are efforts to make this program permanent by way of State legislative enactment.

We encourage the administration and DHS to sharpen its focus on risk-based decision making as program priorities are developed. Through risk-informed processes, we also encourage DHS to collaborate with State homeland security leaders on future mandated programs and grant allocations. This process would allow for advanced planning to occur with new priorities, rather than awaiting an annual notice of funding opportunity and having only the application submission window to impart Federal planning priorities.

As a State with a high-risk urban area, we continue our support of the UASI program. Here, too, we welcome continued risk-informed decisions about funding allocations, priorities, and expansion of jurisdictions. While the homeland security grant program has been with us since the beginning, we appreciate the Federal Government's attempts to broaden resources provided into other programs such as targeted violence prevention. Again, collaboration with the States will strengthen these programs and help inform where both financial and programmatic resources would be most efficiently invested.

We encourage DHS to harmonize the program with all of its components as new programs are developed. There remain instances where some components of DHS may not be engrained with the awareness, knowledge, or rationale of a new program, making full collaboration within the States difficult. This is most important in those areas where one component may be developing the policy of a new program while another component is developing the administrative necessities of a related grant program. We understand the difficulties in creating National programs and appreciate DHS's continued work and perseverance.

One noticeable area of continued focus is cybersecurity. NJOHSP, through its New Jersey Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Cell (NJCCIC), is charged with leading and coordinating New Jersey's cybersecurity efforts while building resiliency to cyber threats throughout the State. We do so by focusing on the confluence of physical and cyber risk, using enterprise risk management techniques to drive our decision making. We focus on information sharing with both the public and private sectors, and we oversee the State government Garden State Network to ensure that critical Government functions continue uninterrupted.

Cybersecurity challenges are addressed with a wide-area lens in New Jersey. We recognize that threats in the cyber realm are both an end target and a vector through which other consequences may manifest. Whether the support of a criminal enterprise, the malicious destruction of control mechanisms, or the interruption of critical services, cybersecurity consequences can affect a multitude of unrelated targets. It is why our preparedness posture focuses on integrated threats with a goal of agnostic consequence management. No matter what caused the issue, we strive to develop capabilities to deal with it. It is the quintessential progression through prevention, protection, response, and recovery and the basis upon which we rest our strategy.

With this approach in mind, we welcome conversations with DHS about dedicated funding or prioritization for cybersecurity. Unlike the physical realm, cybersecurity threats, vulnerabilities, and consequences change the result of the risk equation. In doing so, focused spending on cybersecurity will require a collaborative approach among States and the Federal Government to ensure that risk is properly identified and prioritized in new programs.

CONCLUSION

As we all work on today's challenges, we constantly remain aware of what tomorrow may bring. Looking to the future, we must ensure that we are not preparing only for the most recent incident. The last year has highlighted many of the challenges for which our Nation's preparedness could improve. Whether focusing on supply chain resiliency, the criticality of functions that drive our markets and economy, or the services that support our way of life, we must constantly adapt. In New Jersey, we have spent the last 4 years trying to position for these evolutions. In that vein, we applaud DHS's movement toward critical functions and away from a singular focus on infrastructure assets. We appreciate DHS's sharpened focus on collective capabilities and priorities for the grant programs.

We will remain dedicated to further collaboration with our partners at the local, county, State, and Federal levels to work on risk mitigation efforts for both the short and long term. NJOHSP relies on partner engagement, and relationship building is essential to our core goals. Through the development of working groups, robust information sharing, increased interagency interactions, and public awareness campaigns, NJOHSP has remained successful in meeting its mission. NJOHSP will continue to generate accurate assessments of National security threats both at home

and abroad and investigate every potential threat that could impact the communities in New Jersey.

Chairwoman Demings, Ranking Member Cammack, and distinguished Members of the subcommittee, I thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.

I look forward to your questions and yield back to the Chairwoman.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. Thank you so much, Mr. Maples.

The Chair now recognizes the Orlando Police Chief, Chief Rolón, to summarize his statement for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF ORLANDO ROLÓN, CHIEF OF POLICE,
ORLANDO POLICE DEPARTMENT**

Chief ROLÓN. Thank you, Chairwoman Demings, I am happy to participate in today's hearing.

Can you hear me?

Chairwoman DEMINGS. Chief, you are a little in and out, but we can hear you now.

Chief ROLÓN. OK. It is an honor to appear before the panel led by 2 representatives from the State of Florida, Chairwoman Demings, who is a friend and former chief of police here at the Department where I have the privilege to lead, and the Ranking Member Cammack, who knows first-hand the sacrifices first responders make.

I appear before you today as the chief of the Orlando Police Department. It is also a privilege to testify on behalf of the Major City Chiefs Association.

Local law enforcement has been the front line, whether it be responding to a terrorist attack, natural disaster, or the global pandemic. FEMA preparedness grants, especially UASI, and State Homeland Security Grant Programs provide critical resources that bolstered law enforcement's ability to prevent and respond to these threats. It is worth noting that nearly every UASI-eligible jurisdiction is a member of the MCCA and robust stakeholder engagements is a must. Unfortunately, that type of engagement isn't the standard or formalized. In order to ensure preparedness grants are meeting the needs of grant recipients, FEMA should solicit the local law enforcement input.

As you are likely aware, FEMA considered making several changes to the fiscal year 2021 UASI and State Homeland Security Grants, changes related to risk determination with nearly double the number of jurisdictions eligible for UASI funding, or FEMA to spread already limited funds. Another proposed change would have made UASI funding competitive with results in funding inconsistencies and favor jurisdictions that can write the best applications. Funding should be allocated based on risk and not the quality of the grant writers.

I understand FEMA is still considering some of these changes. FEMA now also requires grantees dedicate 30 percent of their funding to National priority areas. This is a 10 percent increase from last year. While National priority areas can help ensure limited grant funding is also used to address the most significant threats, they must be developed in consultation with key stakeholders to ensure they accurately reflect threats. Again, this is not always the case.

For example, FEMA's consultation with MCCA members while developing the National priority areas in the proposed changes to

the funding formula was limited, at best. I understand that Secretary Mayorkas recently instructed FEMA to host a series of stakeholder listening sessions and the MCCA looks forward to collaborating on future grant guidance.

UASI and State Homeland Security grant recipients often engage in years-long planning work. Predictability is key. There needs to be more transparency with respect to the risk validation process that is used to determine the grant allocations. While grantees are allowed to review and comment on the risk profile, they are unable to see the specific—the data that was used to calculate the risk.

In light of these challenges, FEMA should let personnel from each jurisdiction with the appropriate clearances see the specific data that was used to formulate the risk profile. It is also important to ensure that FEMA's risk methodology captures all the relevant factors that contribute to a grantee's risk. For example, the sheer number of tourists who visit Orlando, coupled with the fact that many of them are visiting soft targets, like our famous theme parks, represents a substantial risk that should be accounted for. Until recently tourism-related metrics, such as daily visitors and special events, were not included. FEMA must continue to review and update its risk formulas and properly address the needs of the jurisdictions.

Although today's hearings have focused on FEMA grants, a conversation of preparedness would not be complete without touching on some recent challenges. Over the past decade local law enforcement has become a public target for cyber attacks. We are lucky in Orlando to have a great chief information officer, Rosa Akhtarkhavari, that understands the seriousness of these threats and has taken steps to secure our city's systems. This is not always the case, as we have seen ransomware attacks in Atlanta and Baltimore.

Orlando knows just how dangerous threats like the massive tourism can be and the Orlando Department has to be able to apply many of the lessons learned from the Pulse Nightclub tragedy to mitigate other threats and prevent violence. The MCCA has committed to continue to serve as a conduit between our membership, the Federal Government, and other key stakeholders to help build those relationships.

I would like to close by thanking the committee for its continued support of FEMA preparedness grants and the MCCA looks forward to continue to work closely with all of you to achieve our shared goals here in our communities. I look forward to any questions the committee may have.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Chief Rolón follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ORLANDO ROLÓN

APRIL 28, 2021

Chairwoman Demings . . . Ranking Member Cammack . . . and distinguished Members of the subcommittee: Thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's hearing. I appear before you today as the chief of police in Orlando, Florida. It is also my privilege to testify on behalf of the Major Cities Chiefs Association (MCCA), a professional association of police chiefs and sheriffs representing the largest cities in the United States and Canada, of which I currently serve as a member of the executive board. It is particularly special to testify in front of a panel led

by two Congresswomen from my home State of Florida. It is also an honor to appear before Chairwoman Demings, who is the former chief of the police department I am now privileged to lead.

Local law enforcement is on the front lines of responding to any emergency, whether it be a terrorist attack, natural disaster, or global pandemic. FEMA preparedness grants are critical resources that bolster law enforcement's ability to prevent and respond to terrorist attacks and other associated threats. The Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP), which includes the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) and State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSP), are particularly valuable for local law enforcement.

These programs have only grown in importance as the threat environment facing the homeland becomes more complex, especially as local law enforcement is consistently asked to take on more responsibilities and stretch limited resources further. My testimony will provide a local law enforcement perspective on these critical programs and offer a few suggestions on how they may be improved. More specifically, I will touch on recent changes that have been proposed to these grant programs, outline ways to enhance the predictability and integrity of the funding formulas, and discuss some of the challenges law enforcement has faced over the past year.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO FISCAL YEAR 2021 NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

As you likely are aware, in advance of the release of the fiscal year 2021 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), FEMA considered making a few significant changes to UASI and the State Homeland Security Grant Program. These changes would have impacted how funding gets distributed and the amount of funding that some jurisdictions receive. While not implemented in fiscal year 2021, I understand that some of the changes are still being considered for inclusion in future Notices of Fundings Opportunities. The MCCA has voiced concerns about some of the proposed changes and calls on FEMA and Congress to work closely with stakeholders throughout the entire process to ensure potential changes to these grant programs are carefully vetted and considered.

Changes to Risk Calculation Formula

One proposed change would have altered how FEMA calculates risk. FEMA uses 3 components—threat, vulnerability, and consequence—to determine risk. Currently, consequence is weighted more heavily than threat or vulnerability. Under the proposed change, each component would have an equal weight.

By statute, UASI funding is limited to the urban areas that comprise 85 percent of the National risk. Since the input for consequence in FEMA's risk methodology is driven primarily by a jurisdiction's population and population density, this risk is currently consolidated in roughly 30 cities. By weighting consequence equal to threat and vulnerability in the formula, the number of cities that comprise 85 percent of the National risk will more than double. This will force FEMA to spread already finite funds more thinly, thereby impacting the program's effectiveness. Should this change be included in future Notices of Funding Opportunities, Congress must ensure there is a requisite increase in appropriations for UASI.

Competitive Funding

Another proposed change would have made UASI funding 100 percent competitive. Currently, UASI jurisdictions receive a targeted funding range based on their risk. As part of the proposed change, UASI funding would be split into 1 of 3 buckets, and cities would compete for funding with the other cities in their same bucket.

There are several challenges associated with making UASI funding fully competitive. First, it will likely result in funding inconsistencies and complicate preparedness planning since it will be nearly impossible for cities to predict how much funding they'll receive in a given year. This challenge will only be exacerbated during years that cities move into a new bucket. Second, having the cities with the most considerable amount of risk compete against each other will leave gaping holes in risk mitigation for some of the most attractive targets for terrorism throughout the United States. Finally, a competitive UASI program could very well result in a situation where funding is skewed toward those cities that can write the "best" grant application. UASI is designed to enhance preparedness, and awards should be made based on applicants' risk, not the quality of their grant writers.

DEDICATED FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

To receive their full allocation of UASI and State Homeland Security Grant Program funds, grantees must dedicate a certain percentage of funds to projects that meet the criteria outlined in statute or the grant program's Notice of Funding Opportunity. Congress and FEMA must ensure that these requirements align with the

threats facing grant recipients. The percentage of a recipient's award that must be dedicated to these obligations has continued to grow year after year. If this pattern continues, Congress and FEMA should also consider establishing separate funding streams for specific activities to help ensure grantees have sufficient funding to invest in projects to address risks outside of the program-mandated priorities.

Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Activities Threshold

Following the 9/11 attacks, Congress created the Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program to help build State, local, and Tribal law enforcement's capabilities to respond to terrorist attacks. This program has been steadily weakened over the years, and in 2007, it stopped receiving funding as a stand-alone grant program. It was replaced with Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Activities (LETPA), and States are now required to use 25 percent of all UASI and State Homeland Security Grant Program funds for Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Activities.

Despite the program being reduced to what is essentially a bureaucratic requirement for States to receive FEMA funding, the required spending on Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Activities still provides value. For example, one MCCA member uses this specific carve-out to help fund its fusion center and Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear Explosive (CBRNE) teams.

There have been recent efforts by some to remove or further reduce the Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Activities requirement. If successful, this would significantly impact the amount of Federal funding dedicated to local law enforcement's unique role in preventing terrorist attacks. This undoubtedly would be detrimental to homeland security overall, especially in the current budget environment where law enforcement is continually asked to respond to new threats and do more with fewer resources. If Congress is not willing to restore the existing Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Activities threshold to an independently funded program, it must, at minimum, ensure the current requirement in statute is not weakened further.

National Priority Areas

Beginning in fiscal year 2020, FEMA began to require that grant recipients use specific percentages of UASI and State Homeland Security Grant Program funds to address certain National Priority Areas. In fiscal year 2021, grantees will be required to spend 30 percent of their funds on these National Priorities Areas, a 10 percent increase over the fiscal year 2020 requirement. Notably, funding projects in these areas can also be used to meet the Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Activities threshold, potentially limiting the ability of law enforcement to utilize the Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Activities set aside for terrorism prevention activities that fall outside of these priorities. While the establishment of National Priorities Areas can undoubtedly help ensure that limited grant funding is used to help address the most significant threats facing the country, these priorities must be developed in consultation with key stakeholders to ensure they reflect the needs of UASI and State Homeland Security Grant Program grantees.

Direct Funding Streams for Fusion Centers

Created initially to break down silos of intelligence among partner agencies and enhance information sharing, the fusion center network has taken on a primary role in intelligence and information sharing at the local, State, and Federal levels. As the threats that local law enforcement is asked to mitigate metastasize, the need for robust information sharing has only increased. Fusion centers play a critical role in ensuring law enforcement personnel across the Nation, at all levels of government, can access the information they need to keep our communities safe.

Despite fusion center's critical role in the homeland security enterprise, there are currently no direct funding streams to maintain the network of fusion centers. While Homeland Security Grant Program funding can be used for this purpose, it does not explicitly carve out designated amounts. As a result, fusion centers may need to compete with other priorities and projects for grant dollars. This can produce uncertainty and potentially put vital programs and capabilities at risk. While FEMA recognizes the important role fusion centers play and preparedness grants have prioritized fusion centers for several years, Congress should consider establishing a separate funding stream for fusion centers.

PREDICTABILITY AND INTEGRITY

It is not uncommon for projects funded by FEMA preparedness grants to be multi-year efforts. Grantees often engage in years-long planning processes to ensure they can use grant funding to address threats and priorities in their jurisdiction in a timely manner. For these efforts to be successful, there must be predictability and

integrity in the risk calculation and funding allocation process FEMA uses each year.

Engagement with Stakeholders

Strong partnerships across all levels of government are critical if preparedness grants are to be as effective as possible. FEMA is an essential partner, and improvements can be made concerning stakeholder engagement. More specifically, there needs to be a more formal process for soliciting local law enforcement input on preparedness grants. For example, FEMA's consultation with MCCA members while developing the National Priorities Area included in the fiscal year 2020 Notice of Funding Opportunity was limited. The engagement regarding the proposed changes to the fiscal year 2021 Notice of Funding Opportunity was also haphazard. This is concerning given that nearly every UASI jurisdiction is a MCCA member.

Providing local law enforcement and other key stakeholders with the opportunity to ensure their voices are reflected in the policy-making process will help ensure transparency in grant directives and guidance. Working with stakeholders ahead of time will also help mitigate situations where a FEMA policy change forces grantees to make last-minute pivots in their planning processes, which can inhibit their ability to effectively allocate the resources these grants provide.

The MCCA was pleased to hear that Secretary Mayorkas recently instructed FEMA to host a series of listening sessions and other engagement events with Homeland Security Grant Program stakeholders, including law enforcement associations like the MCCA. The MCCA looks forward to collaborating with FEMA to provide our perspective and input on future grant guidance.

Transparency in Risk Profile Calculation

There is a need to inject additional transparency into the risk validation process that is used to determine funding allocations for UASI and the State Homeland Security Grant Program. While States, territories, and UASI-eligible Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) are allowed to review and comment on their risk profiles, there is a lack of detailed information. For example, while the risk profile explains how each element of the profile is calculated and notes the sources used, grantees are unable to see the specific data utilized. This makes it challenging to provide substantive feedback, confirm the calculations are accurate, or raise other concerns. For example, after a historical data call, one MCCA member learned that several of their critical infrastructure assets had been omitted, resulting in the Metropolitan Statistical Area's risk being miscalculated.

In light of these challenges, FEMA should let personnel from each jurisdiction, with the appropriate clearances, see the specific data used to formulate the risk profile. This will help increase transparency, further FEMA and stakeholder engagement, provide another opportunity for State and local threat information to be incorporated, and ensure the risk to communities across the Nation are being calculated accurately.

Accounting for Tourism in the Risk Formula

Orlando and several other MCCA members that receive UASI grants are unique in that the number of annual visitors is significantly greater than the local population. For example, in 2018, Orlando was one of America's most-visited destinations, welcoming 75 million visitors.¹ The U.S. Census Bureau estimated that the population of the entire Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford Metropolitan Statistical Area in 2018 was only 2.6 million.²

The sheer number of tourists coupled with the fact that many of them are visiting soft targets—such as Orlando's many theme parks—represents a substantial risk that should be accounted for in FEMA's risk methodology. Until recently, tourism-related metrics, such as special events and daily visitors, were not included. Once these factors were incorporated, several prominent tourist destinations saw significant increases in their UASI funding allocations. FEMA must continue to review and update its risk formula as necessary to ensure it properly weights the unique needs of tourist destinations.

It is also important to ensure the risk methodology is resilient and flexible enough to account for challenges related to being a tourist destination. This point has been

¹"Orlando Announces Record 75 Million Visitors, Solidifies Ranking as No. 1 U.S. Travel Destination," *Visit Orlando*, May 9, 2019. <https://www.visitorlando.com/media/press-releases/post/orlando-announces-record-75-million-visitors-solidifies-ranking-as-no-1-u-s-travel-destination/>.

²"Annual Estimates of the Resident Population: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2019," *United States Census Bureau*. <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2010s-total-metro-and-micro-statistical-areas.html>.

underscored by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has significantly impacted tourism and the number of special events held throughout the country. Jurisdictions who rely on such factors to ensure their risk is accurately represented should not face the prospect of decreased funding due to acts of God or other incidents that are outside of human control and impossible to predict. The MCCA understands that FEMA made slight changes to its fiscal year 2021 risk methodology to account for the impacts of COVID-19 and encourages FEMA to continue to exercise discretion, as necessary, to account for the effects of future incidents and crises.

Timely Disbursement of Funding

Once a project using UASI and State Homeland Security Grant Program funding is approved, it is important that FEMA disburses the necessary resources expeditiously. Several MCCA members have expressed concern with navigating FEMA's bureaucracy and getting the funding released for some projects quickly. Things become even more complicated when grantees are trying to fund a project that requires additional levels of approval from FEMA, such as the acquisition of controlled equipment. Failure to disburse funds in a timely manner is not only detrimental to homeland security as it inhibits recipients from mitigating risks as efficiently as possible, but it also can cause challenges as grantees work to coordinate project delivery with other public safety entities, vendors, and other stakeholders.

ADDITIONAL PREPAREDNESS CHALLENGES

Although today's hearing is focused on FEMA's grant programs, a conversation on preparedness would not be complete without mentioning some of the other challenges facing local law enforcement. A global pandemic, a National conversation on policing, wide-spread civil unrest, and the emergence of new threats have created one of the most challenging environments for local law enforcement in recent memory. I am proud of how the brave members of local law enforcement rise to meet these challenges every day to keep our communities safe.

COVID-19

Local law enforcement has remained on the front lines throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Especially early on in the pandemic, MCCA members had to make drastic changes to their operations in order to continue offering essential services and ensuring public safety.

Furthermore, nearly every major city in the country experienced upticks in violent crime throughout the pandemic. Local law enforcement continued to address these calls for service, despite at times having large segments of the workforce quarantined. Finally, the strain COVID-19 placed on local budgets will undoubtedly impact local law enforcement well beyond the end of the pandemic. Federal assistance, provided through legislation such as the CARES Act and the American Rescue Plan, has been instrumental as communities across the country continue to respond to and recover from this crisis.

Cybersecurity

Over the past decade, law enforcement agencies have experienced an increase in cyber attacks by both criminal entities and "hacktivists." Considering their prominent public role and the sensitive information on their systems and networks, police departments, including many MCCA members, have become popular targets for ransomware, denial-of-service, and doxing attacks. As law enforcement relies more and more on technology systems to carry out its mission, these attacks can have catastrophic effects. For example, a ransomware attack could deny police officers access to critical records and investigative files, and denial-of-service attacks could take 9-1-1 dispatch centers off-line, making it more difficult to get help to citizens in need. During the civil unrest that occurred throughout the summer of 2020, many MCCA members also struggled with having personnel and their families subjected to harassment and other threats to their safety as a result of being doxed.

Law enforcement agencies can be especially vulnerable if their technology systems are outdated, or they do not adequately train their personnel to mitigate cyber threats. These challenges can be exacerbated by police departments' connections with larger municipal networks, which may be less secure and provide an alternative vector for attacks. We are lucky in Orlando to have a great chief information officer that understands the seriousness of these threats and has taken numerous steps to secure our city's systems from infiltration.

Congress can take a few steps to help local governments, including local law enforcement agencies, better mitigate cyber threats. First, Congress must ensure the grant programs that help build local cyber capacity, such as the Homeland Security Grant Program, are fully funded. Congress should also continue to ensure agencies

such as DHS's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) have the authorities and resources needed to continue programs and efforts designed to help law enforcement prevent and respond to cyber attacks.

Domestic Violent Extremists

The recent rise in domestic violent extremism (DVE) is another threat that local law enforcement is currently working diligently to address. Local law enforcement, including MCCA members, is no stranger to addressing extremist threats, having been a key stakeholder in responding to the rise in home-grown violent extremism just a few years ago. Unfortunately, Orlando knows just how dangerous extremism can be and how extremist violence can devastate a community. The Orlando Police Department has been able to apply many of the lessons learned from the Pulse Nightclub tragedy to mitigate other threats and prevent extremist violence.

The importance of developing strong relationships between Federal, State, and local law enforcement authorities cannot be emphasized enough. These relationships often manifest themselves in joint investigations, increased information sharing, and other initiatives that are critical in addressing threats such as domestic violent extremism effectively. Through its oversight efforts, Congress must continue to ensure Federal agencies work closely with their local counterparts and that mechanisms for promoting this collaboration, such as fusion centers, are adequately funded. The MCCA also commits to continue to serve as a conduit between our membership, the Federal Government, and other key stakeholders to help build those relationships.

Congress must also ensure that law enforcement retains access to the tools and technology that assist with investigations, including domestic violent extremism investigations, such as facial recognition. Facial recognition is a valuable tool that helps generate leads and makes law enforcement operations more effective and efficient. Congress must also address the threat posed by the ability of extremists and other violent criminals to "go dark." These challenges have frustrated on-going investigations and hindered law enforcement's ability to detect additional extremist activity and combat everyday violent crime.

CONCLUSION

FEMA's grant programs undoubtedly provide critical resources and help ensure that local law enforcement is prepared to prevent and mitigate the variety of threats that fall under our purview. On behalf of the Major Cities Chiefs Association and the Orlando Police Department, I'd like to thank the committee for both its support of the Homeland Security Grant Program, including UASI, and continued oversight efforts to ensure the program meets the needs of local law enforcement. I also must thank the committee for the support it has shown for the brave members of local law enforcement during one of the most challenging years in the history of our noble profession. The MCCA looks forward to continuing to work closely with all of you to achieve our shared goal of securing our communities from all threats.

I look forward to answering any questions the committee may have.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. Thank you so much, Chief Rolón.

The Chair now recognizes Chief Altman for 5 minutes.
Chief.

**STATEMENT OF ROBERT V. ALTMAN, BATTALION CHIEF,
OCALA FIRE RESCUE**

Chief ALTMAN. Good afternoon, Congresswoman Demings, Ranking Member Cammack, and Chairman of the committee, Mr. Thompson.

I am Robert Altman. Again, I am the battalion chief with Ocala Fire Rescue located in North Central Florida. I am pleased to testify before your subcommittee today to discuss the importance of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program known as AFG.

I was recently asked by Congresswoman Cammack from the Third District to give some testimony on the Assistance to Firefighter Grants program from my own first-hand knowledge. I also have been on the Assistance to Firefighter Grants program, selected by the International Association of Firefighters for FEMA.

Ocala Fire Rescue, the Department I work at, operates out of 7 stations providing emergency services to an estimated 61,000 full-time residents and approximately 156,000 people on an average weekday. The Department covers just over 47 square miles and has an automatic aid agreement with Marion County Fire Rescue to assist with emergency coverage for 1,663 square miles and over 365,000 residents.

Ocala Fire Rescue has been the beneficiary of several AFG awards in the past, including 1 this previous year. The Department was awarded a grant for hearing protection previously for apparatus, 2 grants roughly 10 years apart for self-contained breathing apparatus, known as SCBAs. We are awaiting the arrival of the newly-awarded SCBAs currently.

Fire Departments like Ocala depend on the funds to make major purchases that were either not budgeted for or the current financial climate could not cover the expense.

Ocala Fire Rescue, like many other departments across our Nation, has been struggling to recover from the financial downturn our Nation previously went through. The COVID-19 pandemic has put new strains on departments that have not fully recovered. Bills like the current Senate Bill 426; Firefighter Cancer bill, will also put a financial strain on fire departments across Florida. While joining 44 other States in our country to improve firefighter safety, it has a cost to the cities and counties and departments.

Departments are trying to improve the personal protective equipment (PPE) of their firefighters. The new gear that is recommended to protect firefighters is costly. Some departments just do not have the resources or the budget to cover these items. This is where the AFG program helps these departments, not only cover the recommendations and meet the current National Fire Protection Standards, but also the mission of the fire departments, to protect those that protect us, our firefighters.

Florida firefighters are asked to perform in all types of emergencies, cover all types of economic development, from rural to urban terrain and everything in between. We respond to all natural disasters, hurricanes, hazardous materials incidents, technical rescues, fires, and medical emergencies, and any other situation that the public can't handle. A perfect example of the need for AFG is currently the COVID-19 pandemic we are all working through. Without the Federal aid that was offered last year by AFG, many departments just could not meet the communities' needs. Services would have been cut short to the people that needed it the most.

Departments across the Nation, like my own, are currently being asked to submit flat budgets or decrease their current budget proposals due to the cost the pandemic has put on their departments and communities. Funding that was budgeted for other critical equipment has spent on COVID-19 response. With this unexpected pandemic and its costs, departments still need to respond to every other emergency that is out there. They still need to keep up on schedule with PPE purchases and other essential equipment that fire departments need to operate and serve their citizens.

I have read numerous applications from departments all across our Nation, large and small, all with the same missions and goals. The AFG not only help those departments protect the lives and

safety of their citizens, it also helps them meet their goals of firefighter safety. Without the AFG many departments would not be able to provide adequate PPE to its firefighters to do basic fundamentals of the fire service, which is fight fire. I have read too many applications where departments do not have enough bunker gear to outfit their firefighters so that each firefighter has his own individual turnout gear. Fire departments are driving 30-year-old emergency vehicles as front-line apparatus. Departments asking for exhaust scavenging systems for their apparatus, so firefighters and the public do not have to breathe cancer-causing fumes from emergency vehicles.

The other side of the AFG is that departments that are able to maintain and secure awards can then use other funds to advance life safety projects that the fire service offers to its citizens. Departments like mine can offer smoke detector programs, hands-on CPR to schools and businesses, water safety programs, and community paramedic programs, just to name a few that we offer.

Ocala Fire Rescue is also part of USAR Task Force 8, which combines 3 local departments, Ocala, Gainesville, and Marion County. We have 28 members from our department on the regional team. We have been able to train and receive the most advanced technical equipment through the AFG awards. We have responded to many emergencies throughout Florida and the southeast region of the USA. When a department receives a grant from AFG, not only does the award help their department, it helps neighboring departments by providing more resources and more up-to-date resources for those departments.

In closing, being a recipient of AFG grants and as a reviewer, I can attest that the need to continue, and when possible, increase the allotted budget for AFG is greatly needed. Without these funds many departments would be cutting services, laying off firefighters and asking firefighters to put their lives at greater risk by performing their job without adequate personal protective equipment or inadequate firefighting equipment. When that disaster strikes, local fire departments will be the first to arrive. They need the equipment to do their jobs safely. I am glad that the Federal Government recognizes the need to assist in funding these grants. These grants help local departments meet their basic needs and improve their capabilities to respond to all hazards.

I thank you for the opportunity today to testify about my experience with the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Chief Altman follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ROBERT V. ALTMAN

APRIL 28, 2021

Good afternoon Congresswoman Demings and the Members of the subcommittee. I am Robert Altman, a current battalion chief with Ocala Fire Rescue in Ocala Florida, located in North Central Florida. I am pleased to testify before your subcommittee today to discuss the importance of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program known as AFG. I was recently asked by Congresswoman Cammack from Florida's 3d Congressional District to give some testimony on the Assistance to Firefighter Grants program from my own first-hand knowledge. I also have been selected to review AFG grants by The International Association of Firefighters for FEMA.

Ocala Fire Rescue operates out of 7 fire stations providing emergency services to estimated 61,000 full-time residents and approximately 156,000 people on an average week day. The Department covers just over 47 square miles and has an automatic aid agreement with Marion County Fire Rescue to assist with emergency coverage for 1,663 square miles and over 365,000 residents.

Ocala Fire Rescue has been the beneficiary of several AFG awards in the past including one this previous year. The department was awarded a grant for hearing protection in our Fire Apparatus previously, 2 grants roughly 10 years apart for self-contained breathing apparatus known as SCBA's. We are awaiting the arrival of our newly awarded SCBA's currently. Fire Departments like Ocala depend on the Federal funds to make major purchases that either were not budgeted for or the current financial climate could not cover the expense. Ocala Fire Rescue like many other departments across our Nation has been struggling to recover from the financial downturn our Nation previously went through. The current COVID-19 Pandemic has put new strains on departments that have not fully recovered. Bills like the current SB 426; Firefighter Cancer bill have also put a financial strain on Fire departments across Florida. While joining 44 other States in our country to improve firefighter safety it has a cost to the cities, counties, and departments. Departments are trying to improve the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) of their firefighters. The new gear that is recommended to protect firefighters is costly, some departments just do not have the resources to budget for these items. That is where the AFG program helps these departments not only cover the recommendations and meet the current National Fire Protection standards but also the mission of the departments, to protect those that protect us, the firefighters.

Florida firefighters are asked to perform in all types of emergencies, we cover all types of economic development, from rural to urban terrain and everything in between. We respond to natural disasters, hurricanes, hazardous materials incidents, technical rescues, fires, and medical emergencies and any other situation that the public cannot handle. A perfect example of the need for AFG is the current COVID-19 pandemic we are working through, without the Federal aid that was offered last year by AFG many departments just could not meet the communities needs, services would have been cut short to the people that needed it the most.

Departments across the Nation like my own Department are currently being asked to submit flat budgets or decrease their current budget proposals due to the cost the pandemic has put on departments and communities. Funding that was budgeted for other critical equipment was spent on COVID-19 response. With this unexpected pandemic and its costs, departments still need to respond to every other emergency that is out there. They still need to keep on schedule with PPE purchases and other essential equipment that fire departments need to operate and serve their citizens. I have read numerous applications from departments all across our Nation, large and small all with the same missions and goals. The AFG grants not only help the departments protect the lives and safety of citizens it also helps them meet their goals of firefighter safety. Without the AFG many departments would not be able to provide adequate PPE to its firefighters to do the basic fundamentals of the fire service, fight fire. I have read too many applications where departments do not have enough bunker gear to outfit their firefighters so that each firefighter has his own individual turnout gear. Fire departments that are driving 30-year-old emergency vehicles as front-line apparatus. Departments asking for exhaust-scavenging systems for their apparatus, so firefighters and the public do not have to breathe cancer-causing fumes from emergency vehicles.

The other side to the AFG is that departments that are able to maintain and secure awards can then use other funds to advance life safety projects that the Fire Service offers to its communities. Departments like mine can offer smoke detector programs, hands-only CPR to schools and businesses, water safety, and Community Paramedic Programs to name a few.

Ocala Fire Rescue is also part of USAR task force 8 which combines 3 local departments, Ocala, Gainesville, and Marion County. We have 28 members from our department on the regional team. We have been able to train and receive the most advanced technical equipment through the AFG awards. We have responded to many emergencies throughout Florida and the southeast region of the USA. When a Department receives a grant from AFG not only does the award help their Department, but it also helps the neighboring departments, by adding more resources and/or more up-to-date resources.

In closing, being a recipient of AFG grants and as a reviewer I can attest that the need to continue and when possible, increase the allotted budget for AFG is greatly needed. Without these funds many departments would be cutting services, laying off firefighters and asking firefighters to put their lives at greater risk by performing their job without adequate personal protective equipment or inadequate

firefighting equipment. When a disaster strikes, local fire departments will be the first to arrive, they need the equipment to safely do their job, I am glad that the Federal Government recognizes the need to assist in funding these grants. Grants help local fire departments meet their basic needs and improve their capabilities to respond to all hazards. I thank you for the opportunity today to testify about my experience with the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. Thank you so much, Chief Altman. I want to thank all of our witnesses, this very geographically diverse panel of witnesses.

I will remind the subcommittee that we will each have 5 minutes to question the panel. I will now recognize myself for questions.

I would like to begin, Chief Rolón, with you.

Cities like Orlando have unfortunately found themselves, regardless of which party within in the White House, on a terribly unpredictable roller coaster, not knowing year to year whether to expect DHS grant funds to be available to maintain core, counterterrorism, and preparedness programs.

From your perspective, Chief, how has this lack of predictability impacted Orlando's ability to be forward-leaning in addressing emerging threats?

Chief ROLÓN. Chairwoman Demings, I think, to put it in simple terms, we have been short-changed, in my opinion, in the Central Florida region considering that we received, prior to COVID, more than 76 million visitors to our region. It has been a challenge for us to solicit and secure the funding that we believe is best to not only support our local residents, but also the millions of people that come, not only from the United States but all over the world.

We have learned to navigate through the system, but it has been very difficult at times for the people who do the heavy lifting in our area, that put everything together in order for us to try to compete for the funds. It has been somewhat of a struggle to show that we are deserving of more support. But we appreciate you and our Congressional delegation who have made a tremendous difference in fighting for us to secure additional funds that have resulted in an increase for funding that now, just this year, will allow us to have for the first time in our region, a high-reach rescue vehicle, one that you would have thought that here in Central Florida we would have had a long time ago.

So, it has been somewhat of a struggle, but we have hope moving forward, through sessions like this and giving us the opportunity to communicate our concerns, we will be able to get better funding in the future.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. Thank you, Chief.

Governor Ige, as a former police chief I know first-hand of how important the Department of Homeland Security Grant Program is to keeping our communities safe. That is why I asked all of you here today for my first hearing as Chair of this subcommittee.

The introduction of fiscal year 2020 of cybersecurity, soft targets, intelligence and information sharing, and emerging threats are National priorities to be addressed by a specified portion of grant funding marked a significant change, but other consequential changes were proposed, including transforming portions of grant funding into competitive grants that were pending when the Biden administration came in.

Governor, can you share your view on the impacts to States of those changes that were made in recent years and how can the committee be thinking about where these programs need to go from here?

Governor IGE. Thank you very much, Chairwoman Demings.

I think it is very important on behalf of all the Governors to advocate for maximum flexibility and reducing the earmarks because all of the States are different, and we definitely have different needs.

We know that the Federal Government has to be more active in cybersecurity. We do know it is a Nation-wide network, and we are only as strong as the weakest link. Clarifying and providing additional funds to improve the cybersecurity posture in every State is so necessary to increase the cybersecurity posture of the country. Many important infrastructure assets are scattered in different States. For example, here in the State of Hawaii we are headquarters to all of the Pacific Commands for the Indo-Pacific Region. Any impact to our community definitely impacts the country's response to any kind of activity that would occur.

So we certainly would encourage maximum flexibility.

As you had said, being able to count on grant funding is so important to improving our posture all across the country.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. Governor, thank you so much. I know how early it is there in your home State as well, so again thank you for being with us.

Director Maples, the State of New Jersey has multiple jurisdictions in the UASI program. To what degree has the changes in the past few years impacted the State's preparedness and what challenges today have they presented from the grants administration standpoint?

Mr. MAPLES. Thank you for the question.

Unfortunately, I don't have a term like aloha to use. I won't tell you what we normally say in New Jersey, but we do have great beaches.

Regarding our preparedness, our robust UASI program covers the most densely populated State in the country, most diverse by many measures. So when we talk about preparedness in our administration of the grant program, the biggest challenge that we face is making sure that all those jurisdictions are on the same page going forward. That is one of the reasons my office exists.

But then when you look at what happened to us just this past year with the rating. Our rating actually went down despite us having a signature terror attack in 2019, December 2019 in Jersey City, and of course our enduring threat. Again, we labeled white supremacy and some of the race-based extremist issues that we are facing as a high threat. So we have that present in our State. So, making sure that those are connected.

One of the other challenges, I would say, is because of where we are in the corridor—and the Governor mentioned about infrastructure—in New Jersey we literally sit at the heart—in the middle of Philadelphia and New York, and of course, extending the Northeast corridor and all the infrastructure that comes with that. So, making sure that our ranking is reflected in that, and then therefore allowing us to administer those grants in a way that provides

across the entire State and across all of our sectors that are present here in New Jersey.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. Thank you so much, Mr. Maples.

The Chair now recognizes the Ranking Member, the gentlewoman from Florida, Ms. Cammack.

Ms. CAMMACK. Thank you, Chairwoman Demings. Again, thank you to all of our witnesses here today. I will jump right in.

Chief Altman, your testimony mentions that you have been selected by IAFF to review the AFG grant proposal. Can you just give a brief overview to all of our Members here today of how that process works? As a follow-up, have you found smaller fire departments, which are often times rural, have difficulties applying for the AFG grant? If so, how can that process be improved?

Chief ALTMAN. Thank you, Congresswoman Cammack.

Yes, about 3 years ago the International Association of Firefighters was looking to add more people onto the FEMA grant team for AFG grants. I was recommended at that time by the FPF president over to FEMA to be selected for a board. I had to fill out a resume and a bio to get in. One of the things I believe where people stay on the board until they retire or stop, you know, working on that board.

So I started reviewing grants roughly 3 years ago for AFG and I have had so many grants. Usually what happens with the rural departments, they have a harder time because they don't either pay a grant writer to write their grants and they don't go back and forth with information. They will give it to maybe a lower-level person inside their department to try and write the grant. It is very important, and it is a huge need for their department, but because they don't hit all the check marks when we are going through, doing all the checking, they just won't make the cut to get the grant.

I think that is the biggest problem. I feel when they are doing this, maybe if they were given either a not just a class from FEMA—FEMA office, some ways to learn how to do the grants, but maybe if there was like an interview process or something the grant—they put together or a video, training video, for these smaller departments to help write grants or the key things they are looking for. It changes every year. At least the key things put inside the grants would help. A lot of these rural departments, like you said, are just not getting the funding. But when we go through and read them, it is just because they didn't use criteria of what FEMA is asking them to put in the grant, not that they don't have the need. They obviously have the need.

So that is pretty much the issue that I found reading the grants.

As far as our department and some of the other departments, which are your larger departments, usually pay grant writers or have grant writers on staff to do it. The small rural departments just can't afford to do that, and that is where they fall short.

Ms. CAMMACK. Excellent. Thank you.

Last Congress—sticking with you, Chief Altman—the CARES Act included \$100 million in supplemental funding for the AFG program. This was distributed in 2 rounds because there was a lack of qualifying applications in the initial application cycle.

Did you participate in the peer review of the grant applications for the CARES Act for AFG?

Chief ALTMAN. I did. It was completed right after we did the AFG grants in the beginning of the year and we followed right up with the CARES Act grant. It was \$100 million for PPE for all departments.

I believe the issue is a lot of the smaller departments didn't get it in time. Somehow, they didn't get the information out to them so that they can apply for it. That is why we had to do—the first time we didn't have enough applicants apply, so we came back around the second time and we captured more departments. But I feel the same way, the smaller departments just didn't have—in such a short period of time from when it was announced to when they—from the opening to closing, they probably issued the information in time, but also, then again, the quality of the application they submitted was the issue.

Ms. CAMMACK. Excellent. OK. Thank you.

Turning now to Mr. Jared Maples up in New Jersey. The fiscal year 2021 budget request proposed a 25 minimum percent non-Federal cautionary requirement for the grant programs that do not carry a statutory cost share. Now, how would a 25 percent cost share impact the current programs and initiatives funded through all of our preparedness grant programs, in your opinion?

Mr. MAPLES. Thank you for the question.

The No. 1 thing about cost share is the investment required, which is good in many cases because it requires the local municipalities and our State resources to come to the table with that investment. However, we want to make sure that when you are talking about cost matching that it allows the flexibility within it so that the State and local municipalities, our partners here, can spend that money effectively.

So I think the biggest impact on that—we would prefer zero for sure—I will tell you that from our side—to give us the maximum flexibility and make sure we can dedicate all those dollars directly toward the programming—the Federal resources of course available. So, I mean we are in favor of having zero cost match. But when there is cost match, we recognize that it does force that specific investment. We want to make sure that we are working with our State and local partners across the board to reflect those investments and the importance of each of those investments, the ownership, if you will, in some of those programs.

A great example in New Jersey is our Secure the Shore Initiative where we talk with our shore communities about vehicle ramming and some of the concerns we have on our boardwalks, for example, and making sure those local municipalities are coming to the plate with resources and dollars as well.

So I think that is one example of what we do with some of our Federal dollars in cost match that is effective. But, again, we want to be careful that it allows the flexibility to the local municipality, that it doesn't take away from other resources.

Ms. CAMMACK. Excellent. Thank you.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. The gentlewoman's time has expired.

Staff has informed me that we are encountering technical issues. Accordingly, we will take a brief recess until we can resolve the

issues. Once the issues are resolved Members will receive notice and time to resume the meeting. Members and witnesses will please remain on the platform with their cameras on and their microphones muted.

The committee will stand in recess subject to the call of the Chair. It should not be long. Thank you for your patience.

[Recess.]

Chairwoman DEMINGS. The Chair will now recognize Members for questions they may wish to ask our witnesses. In accordance with the guidelines laid out by the Chair and the Ranking Member, I will recognize Members in order of seniority, alternating between Majority and Minority. Members are also reminded to unmute themselves when recognized for questions.

The Chair now recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas, Ms. Sheila Jackson Lee.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Good morning. Thanks, Madam Chair, for this very important hearing. Thank you to all of the witnesses.

Let me thank some of the witnesses for mentioning that the issue of security and emergency preparedness comes in many, many forms, and for acknowledging the terrible insurrection provoked by White supremacists and insurrectionists who were there to attack Members of Congress, the Speaker of the House, and the Vice President. Obviously, preparedness is important for local jurisdictions because we never know what an emergency really is.

So I am interested in that kind of flexibility in terms of not discerning what kind of emergency a jurisdiction will be encountering.

So let me first of all start with Governor of Hawaii. Thank you for your presence here, and as well the director of homeland security for New Jersey.

Give me just a short assessment at how important grants and response from the Federal Government are in a manner that allows you to respond to what is at that time an emergency. Emergencies don't send notices and they don't give people a knock on the door, they just come.

Governor.

Governor IGE. Yes, certainly. Thank you so much for this opportunity.

As you said, often times we don't know what the emergency will be and what the full scope of the emergency will be. For many of the States, and Governors taking action to respond to emergencies, we all make a commitment of local resources, but FEMA and Federal support was very, very important, especially for those catastrophic events that exceed the capacity in any given State. I do think it is important, some emergencies do require access to Federal resources, whether it be Department of Defense or other claims of assets that we don't have access to at the State level.

So it is very important, the emergency response and the way it is structured, from county and local jurisdictions to State coordination to Federal coordination is very important. We continue to work to improve coordination between all levels of government. Most emergencies require an all forms of Government response in order to best serve our communities.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Time is of the essence.

Director Maples, that very same question on timeliness and expeditiously getting resources to you when an emergency comes.

Mr. MAPLES. Thank you, Congresswoman, and thank you for the question.

Certainly, no-warning events are the hallmark of what we prepare for in Homeland Security. To that end the dollars that we get from our Federal grant program go a long way for both strategic initiatives and tactical initiatives and how we operate.

So when we are looking at the Jersey City attack or Hurricane Sandy, or really down the line of a lot of these events that have happened in New Jersey over time, we dedicate the dollars for strategic, implementing programs. Things like training exercises, strategic assessments, so the threat assessments that I talked about and the technology behind that, cybersecurity events. We do a lot of strategic investment. Then also the tactical investment. Investing in the tactical gear, equipment, and training allows our first responders to get in place.

Then the Governor talked about that Federal interaction. Pretty much any incident that happens in New Jersey is going to have some sort of a Federal nexus almost immediately. So building the relationships on the front end become a huge part of how we get through those and create resiliency.

Ultimately, our goal is to stop those incidents from happening before-hand, whether they are man-made, or try to mitigate the nature of natural ones, but then also build a resilient community on the back end so we can recover in a better footing.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you.

Mr. Rolón and Mr. Altman, in terms of the local impact. First of all, COVID-19 has been devastating to law enforcement, both police and firefighters. Thank you for your service.

In the course of just answering my question about the importance of these grants, the DHS Preparedness Grant Program, being detailed enough to be able to meet the needs of local entities, such as police and fire, if you respond to that, but more importantly, what impact it has when you need PPE for pandemics and can't access them because of the lack of dollars or the lack of access to Federal grants.

Chief and Battalion Chief. Chief, would you please go first?

Chairwoman DEMINGS. The gentlewoman's time has expired and the witnesses may very quickly and briefly answer the question.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I am so sorry. I can't—I didn't see the clock. It is not showing up on these, so I apologize. Thank you so very much. If they would—

Chairwoman DEMINGS. Thank you. The witnesses may give brief answers please.

Chief Altman.

Chief ALTMAN. Would you like me to go first?

Chairwoman DEMINGS. Yes, please, go first.

Chief ALTMAN. I believe the PPE for our firefighters is very important. We did run down to close level zero for a short period of time, but with our neighboring community fire departments and our hospital, they were able to keep in support. But without local grant funds, we wouldn't be able to keep up with the need for the

amount of calls that we have had for COVID. We just would not be able to handle it.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. Chief of police. Thank you. Chief Rolón. We can't hear you. You are on mute. Now we can hear you.

Chief ROLÓN. So early on there were a lot of unknowns and so there was a lot of concerns that the equipment that everyone was recommending was not readily available. Thankfully, as time progressed those needs became less, but the availability to have access to them also was facilitated.

So, to be honest with you, the early stages of the pandemic were nightmares, but beyond the first 3–4 months, I think everyone realized that, hey, we saw light at the end of the tunnel in the funding process and the support mechanism in place was exactly what we needed in order to get beyond the hump that we were facing.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. Thank you so much. Thank you, Madam Sheila Jackson Lee.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from the State of Louisiana, Mr. Higgins, for 5 minutes.

Mr. HIGGINS. Thank you, Chairwoman Demings and Ranking Member Cammack, for holding today's hearing.

I represent much of Louisiana's gulf coast. I certainly understand the importance of preparedness for disaster mitigation. It is an ongoing challenge. I also spent many years in law enforcement, and I know that a well-funded police force is generally a well-prepared police force. It is essential to protecting our communities and our first responders.

So the Department of Homeland Security Grants are undoubtedly a necessity in this process. I appreciate my friend and colleague, Chairwoman, for holding this hearing.

Mr. Altman, you mentioned in your written testimony, which I have read, that the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program has helped your department's, Ocala Fire Rescue, response to natural disasters. We are particularly concerned about that. Hurricanes, hazardous materials incidents, technical rescues, fires, medical emergencies, et cetera.

Would you further explain to America and to the committee your experience with DHS grants assisting natural disaster response? Give us an overview there, sir, from your perspective.

Chief ALTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Higgins.

I started on our USAR team, which is an operations team. Originally I started on special operations in the 1990's and in mid-2000's USAR came about. We responded to everything from Katrina on forward, just about every natural disaster that has happened in the southeast region. That is my department. We have—we are made up of, like I said, Gainesville and Marion County. What happens is we get the best training for our 4 departments that can put together, best the State has—that our country actually has to offer. We have the great Florida State Fire College right here in our backyard and we teach the military from all over the world and everything right here in Ocala. So we have the most up-to-date. So the grants, what they have done is given us the best equipment, they have given us an amount of money to train that we would not ever have been able to afford the training. Any one

of these departments with the resources the departments have, would not have been able to afford to do the training that we got.

So when we do respond to these natural disasters, we are so much better equipped and we have so much more training that we could have had any point without having the AFG grants. They have made it where we stepped up—I am sorry, go ahead.

Mr. HIGGINS. Would you concur and just clarify for everyone that is tuned in here that your grant applications and approvals are allowing you to train, but you are not just training your department. Speak to the magnification of your training impact due to the access to grant monies for training.

Chief ALTMAN. Sure.

Mr. HIGGINS. How many departments come train with you?

Chief ALTMAN. Well, at a minimum we have 4. We will have 4 big departments come train. Sometimes we have departments all the way from Key West, out through Jacksonville, all the way through the panhandle of Florida that will come down and train with us.

So using all of the equipment that we get for our Task Force team, it is not just used here locally to even be trained on, it is training throughout the whole State of Florida. It just depends on the different times. We offer different classes at different times and different training events. At least quarterly we all meet and get together in different areas from up in Jacksonville to Orlando. We have guys in Orlando actually that are there today because of grant funding doing training.

So it is all the State of—

Mr. HIGGINS. So it certainly magnifies. Would you agree, just in closing—and then I have a question for Mr. Rolón—would you agree that the DHS grant system allows you to save lives and preserve property, protect property and save lives?

Chief ALTMAN. Absolutely, 100 percent.

Mr. HIGGINS. There is a direct correlation there, is there not?

Chief ALTMAN. Yes, there is. Yes, there is.

Mr. HIGGINS. Thank you, sir. God bless you.

Mr. Rolón, in my remaining time, would you please advise to the State and local law enforcement that will ultimately watch this, when it comes to applying for and implementing the best use of DHS Preparedness Grant Programs, what words of advice would you have in my remaining time—which, Madam Chair, I cannot see the clock, but perhaps you could advise the witness.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. The gentleman's time has expired, but the witness may answer the question.

Mr. HIGGINS. Oh, I apologize, Madam Chair. My time has expired, but perhaps he could answer.

Thank you.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. Chief, you are on mute.

Chief ROLÓN. Thank you very much.

I think it is critical for every community, regardless of—it is not a one fit all. Every community has to be measured by what the risks are for that community. I think that is where in part sometimes we come up with these processes that say you must meet these criteria, but it is for the general market that is trying to capitalize on these grant opportunities. Maybe we need to re-tweak

how it is that a city like ours, as compared to Newark, New Jersey, you know, and see if whatever criteria is being set for all to follow is right or not. I think, again, in our case, in our area we have suffered as a result of it.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. Thank you so much, Chief.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from the State of New Jersey, Mr. Payne, for 5 minutes.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you, Madam Chair. Let me just thank you and the Ranking Member for this very timely committee hearing.

I will start with Mr. Maples, who I know very well, and has been very helpful to this committee in the past. Mr. Maples, for the past few fiscal years the risk ranking and funding levels for the Newark, Jersey City, and New Brunswick, New Jersey, UASI jurisdictions, have fluctuated, bringing in an element of unpredictability to the jurisdictions' budget for fiscal year to fiscal year, an issue that I spent a lot of time engaging with FEMA when I was Chairman of this subcommittee.

The question is how has this unpredictability impacted emergency preparedness in New Jersey?

Mr. MAPLES. Thank you for the question, Congressman. Again, thank you for your partnership and friendship over the years.

I will start this, that unpredictability in this business, particularly when we look at strategic investments and strategic programming, is very challenging. That is, it is a lot more efficient, and it is a lot more strategic, quite frankly, to be able to develop the goal that we want to develop by having a little bit more consistency in those rankings. When those rankings drop, for example, to your point, when some of those dollars go away, investments that we thought we were going to be able to make and some of our municipal partners were going to be able to make, we have to push them back, or not even do them in some cases.

So those are direct impacts on things like strategic training initiatives, exercises, some of the tactical preparations of—some of the specific tactical equipment, for example. If we can't invest in those and only have a specific funding source, that unpredictability causes a lot of problems for us to respond to those no warning events that we have talked about.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you.

While in office, former President Trump consistently proposed significant cuts to DHS Preparedness Grants. Now that the Biden administration is at the helm of the Department, please explain the importance of robust funding levels for these grant programs, including how emergency preparedness will be impacted if cuts that the Trump administration proposed were enacted.

So are you there—are there any specific sections of DHS Preparedness Grant funding that you could use immediate additional support?

Mr. MAPLES. So thank you again for that.

I think one of the biggest standout areas that we can talk about is the cybersecurity realm. Right now there is a 7.5 percent dedication in the current grant streams to cybersecurity. That is an evolving threat, that is an incredibly emerging threat of a whole profile, high impact to our National security. Certainly in New Jersey everything from ransomware incidents throughout our municipalities

up to our strategic investment in critical infrastructure protection, that is one area where I think we can see if not a dedicated grant funding stream from our DHS counterparts in the Federal Government, certainly enough taken what we spend or is allocated throughout the investment matrix.

Then also when we talk about this preparedness, those efforts, I think the more preparation that we can do, the “P” in preparedness in OHSP, and it having—those exercises having those communication networks established, which we try to do every single day. If those dollars are increased, I think we will see a lot of impact from an investment perspective.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you, sir. Once again, it is good to see you and thank you for always supporting us here.

With that, Madam Chair, I will yield back.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. The gentleman yields back.

The Chair now recognizes the gentlewoman from Iowa, Ms. Miller-Meeks, for 5 minutes.

Ms. MILLER-MEEKS. Thank you so much, Chair Deming and Ranking Member Cammack, and to all the witnesses for this very important hearing. It is fascinating to me, being a former director of public health, especially after the emergency preparedness and homeland security took place.

I also want to thank Representative Payne for giving me an opening for my question.

So this is for Mr. Director Maples. Within the State of Iowa, as a State senator, I had to advance legislation because of some of our localities and our cities because of cybersecurity. They were ransomed and being paid in bitcoin. We know that China, the Chinese Communist Party, now has its own cryptocurrency and is trying to advance that. I think that is extraordinarily troublesome and problematic for the United States.

You had mentioned, and in your written testimony, you said that you were welcoming conversations with DHS about the dedicated funding for prioritization for cybersecurity. Both State, Homeland Security Grant Program, and UASI recipients are required to spend 7.5 percent of their award on cybersecurity. As you had just started earlier, would you be able to elaborate your thoughts on additional dedicated funding for cybersecurity?

Mr. MAPLES. Sure. Absolutely. One quick adjointer to the previous question that I will add to this so that it impacts your question as well, which is the other side really impact would be the non-profit and security grant program. I think there can be programs implemented very quickly that we will see a lot of impact from. So I do want to make sure I mention that.

From a cybersecurity perspective, I thank you for the question. It is a great one. No. 1 is there has been this tremendous convergence of threat that we see. So previously a cybersecurity incident may be isolated as a specific on-line or cyber environment incident, and now you see this nexus between extremism, whether it be recruiting, whether it be on-line pieces; ransomware is a criminal act. You see an incredible nexus from our foreign organizations like our foreign state—organizations like you talked about with China, that there is a real benefit quite frankly to them to impact us, whether it be through causing chaos on-line, causing those attacks,

exfiltrating information, or IP. There is a huge nexus to that convergence of threat that we deal with every single day in New Jersey.

So when we talk about an uptick, whether it be again in an investment percentage or in a specific set-aside grant stream for cybersecurity, a lot of it will deal with that convergence. So they have to connect. It can't just be independent of the extremism piece and a lot of other preparation and preparedness grants that are out there. It has to be complementary. But then on a cybersecurity side, it is things like getting the small local business, because they become targets, they become targets of something as big as a Chinese state actor all the way down to a criminal actor on a small level. You see huge impacts in New Jersey that I am sure you do in Iowa as well, from a dollar figure, from economic impact, from a trust in the system that we can protect PII and all the information and data that is available, we can protect our networks.

So the dedicated streaming, at least in New Jersey—of course that is what I am speaking on behalf of—we can dedicate that funding to—for technology, for resources, for personnel, for access to communication platforms, to really increase our capability with the Federal Government to team up together to beat that convergence.

So I think that is how I would answer that one.

Ms. MILLER-MEEKS. I only have a little bit more time left, but I am so glad that you brought up the issues that you brought up, because we also have disinformation from—you know, from other governments that are not friendly to the United States. Hopefully you saw the recent *Wall Street Journal* article talking about both Russia and the Chinese Communist Party with their disinformation campaigns on social media to exaggerate the side effects from our vaccines for COVID-19. This is extraordinarily serious. We know we have to get through this pandemic. It is part of—I am sure it has impacted all of you and your jobs in emergency preparedness. You know, your thoughts on that type of disinformation campaign by foreign leaders in the digital or internet realm.

Mr. MAPLES. Thank you for that question. That is a—I hate to say it has become part of our wheelhouse in New Jersey.

The Governor and I spoke very early in the pandemic and we realized there was a problem. One of those was a state-sponsored—and I don't want to get into the specific details—but a state-sponsored actor started a text message strain that started—really started some of the panic around that first March time frame. It said essentially that they had a friend that is high-ranking at FEMA or the military and they are going to kick the doors in and lock the entire country down. That is what led us to start saying well, this is a core Homeland Security problem. I was getting calls from private-sector leaders, Chairmen and Chairwomen, company CEOs, you name it, public sector, and people were really concerned about that. That was 100 percent a foreign influence misinformation, disinformation campaign.

That led us to the vaccinations, like you said, and really across the board. Some of the unrest that we have seen over the past year-and-a-half. So on our website at NJOHSP.gov, we have got a

dedicated web page toward combatting the disinformation and misinformation. Again, we have seen this now in New Jersey as a core Homeland Security discipline and problem set that we have to deal with, and turning that narrative by being trustworthy, transparent, direct, with the information. We are an apolitical organization, we fight to maintain that apolitical nature, and we do that through, again, those mechanisms.

Ms. MILLER-MEEKS. Thank you so much for your answer and thank you, Chair Demings, for indulging his response.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. The gentlewoman's time has expired. Thank you.

As you know, cybersecurity is one of those areas where we think about what keeps us up at night, I would say cybersecurity does. It is certainly the new weapon of choice.

Governor, in the fiscal year 2021 the Department added transnational crime and cyber threats. To the threat portion of the grant risk formula and to the vulnerability piece of the formula it added isolation to try and better account for more remote locations that nevertheless are at risk, particularly at this time of heightened domestic terrorism.

Governor, in your view, do you think these changes help to more accurately reflect the current threat landscape? If not, why not?

Governor IGE. Thank you so much for that question, Chairwoman.

It definitely does improve the threat landscape. You know, as Representative Meeks had asked, the cyber threat is a Nation-wide threat because we are all connected. You know, we are definitely seeking and encouraging the Congress to dedicate a stream of funding to cybersecurity. We are seeing more sophisticated threat actors, as Mr. Maples had commented. We have nation-state threat actors using misinformation campaigns to confuse the residents across all 50 States and territories. It becomes more important that these international actors—and I think the real threat to the American way of life is no business is really prepared to deal with these nation-state actors. They are becoming more sophisticated. The cyber terrorists from out of country have access to the networks within our country. I think most importantly the weakest link in the network is where those cyber actors, those bad actors will enter the network and wreak havoc. So even the smallest county, the smallest business how now has been encouraged to embrace the technology and being part of the network, can become the weakest link and the area of attack.

So I do think it is very, very important. This change is important to recognize the nature of the cyber threat all across the country.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. Thank you so much, Governor Ige.

Chief Altman, I know you talked earlier about grant applications and how some of the smaller agencies just don't have the resources and how you are working together.

Could you talk just a little bit about how you are working together to address a cyber threat to the agencies in your region?

Chief ALTMAN. Thank you, Ms. Demings.

As far as us working together, we have—obviously our IT departments are working, and we have to do training. We actually—we have a weekly training. We have a multi training where we all

meet and get together and address whatever threats or intelligence for cyber training.

Our department has budgeted—put a certain budget together and our city put a certain budget together just to maintain and fight against cyber threats. Like you said, ransomware has become something that is very, very real. I would just like to get this up so I can do this meeting on this; I had to give to our police department and make sure that the computer didn't have anything that was going to affect us for cyberware.

So we have actually been held accountable on our city side for somebody for some ransomware. Our department works with our neighboring cities and counties and we have a joint commission that works for cybersecurity.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. Chief Rolón, I know you spoke earlier about the city of Orlando's commitment to this area. Anything else you would like to add in the area of cybersecurity or cyber threats?

Chief ROLÓN. We have to ensure—we have to make sure that whatever project has been allocated for future funding that is needed to support this important portion of the grants system is there in order for us to be able to best prepare for potential attacks. It is an ever-evolving process, it is an ever-changing process. So the fixes of today may not be the fixes of tomorrow, so we have to have the right people to provide us the support and the right funding to have the equipment to counter these threats.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. Thank you so much.

The Chair now recognizes the gentlewoman from New Jersey, Ms. Bonnie Watson Coleman.

Ms. WATSON COLEMAN. Thank you, Chairwoman and Ranking Member, for this hearing and thank you for—I didn't know if you knew I was on. I was getting a little nervous.

First of all, let me thank all the witnesses, not just for sharing your information with us and your concerns, but for the service that you render to the States and counties and municipalities. We are grateful for the work that you do.

Mr. Maples, I am very—I am Jersey proud. I am very proud of the work that you are doing. I am so glad that you kind-of amended your interest in what were greater needs when you talked about community organizations, especially those I am very concerned about, the UASI grant.

Madam, I am—I don't know if I am causing the feedback, but. So I know that there was a proposal—

Chairwoman DEMINGS. If the gentlewoman would suspend.

Would all Members just make sure that you are muted. Please make sure you are muted.

The gentlewoman may proceed.

Ms. WATSON COLEMAN. Thank you. Thank you. Oh, it is much better.

I know that the Trump administration had proposed increasing the eligibility of UASI grant recipients and at the same time reducing the amount of money that was going to be available. Had that happened, what would that have meant materially in the State of New Jersey? That is one question.

No. 2 is I know we have got cybersecurity issues, I know we have nation-state issues, I know we have foreign attack issues, but it is

clear that we have White supremacy attack issues. With that in mind, are we looking to bring in faith-based communities that didn't necessarily—weren't necessarily vulnerable to foreign terrorists, but would be very much targeted from White supremacists? That would be the Black churches in particular.

Mr. MAPLES. Thank you, Congresswoman, and thank you for your kind words. Both great questions.

So, No. 1, the loss of dollars and an increase in applicants would definitely have a huge impact in New Jersey. We, as you know, are, again, one of the most diverse States in the country and that also extends to our religious community. Also through our community action and non-profits who are eligible for those grant dollars. So we are advocating more eligibility, but a lot more dollars to be commensurate with that side, because the loss in the—the impact would be we just wouldn't be able to get as much—as many dollars directly to a synagogue or a church or a temple or any of those other organizations that are out there because—well, I mean clearly we just need the funding aspect to that.

So we really rely on these dollars in our State to be resilient, to prepare our communities across all of the counties. One of the challenges has been the eligibility in all 21 counties. We don't necessarily have the Federal side. That is an area we would love to see that expansion and we are seeing that now.

But the dollars have to go up not down here—period. Because those are used for cameras, locks, alarms, training, vital.

Ms. WATSON COLEMAN. Yes, go ahead.

Mr. MAPLES. Then as far as our faith-based communities, I love that you asked that question. It is something we focused on from Day 1. Some of our community leaders, across all communities, but in particular the communities that you just mentioned, in our African American Black communities throughout, we had great leads and great impact in developing relationships that weren't there before through our Interfaith Advisory Council.

So we have a 3,500-member council that has every religion in the State. All religions are documented in there in part of that group and we leveraged that to get those grants out there to make sure we are engaging directly with the community. But it is not just us communicating out, it is about the community let us know what issues are so we can head those off before they become real problems. So the community question is something we focus on.

Ms. WATSON COLEMAN. Yes. Thank you.

I am very concerned about domestic violence in this country now, as evidenced by July—January 6 and beyond. So it is good to know that we are expanding our desire to contact and protect those additional types of churches and organizations.

Madam Chair, I see the clock, but I don't know if I have a little bit more time because of what happened.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. Thirty seconds. Thirty seconds.

Ms. WATSON COLEMAN. Forty?

Chairwoman DEMINGS. Thirty.

Ms. WATSON COLEMAN. OK. All right.

Governor, I just wanted to know whether or not you agreed with the testimony of Governor Pritzker of Illinois last year when he said that the initial response to the COVID disaster was disastrous

and air bridge was another type of disaster. What was your experience in Hawaii and what is your experience now?

I thank you for the additional indulgence, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Governor. If you would be able to answer that.

Governor IGE. Sure. Yes, I would agree with Governor Pritzker's assessment. I think the real challenge for all of the States was because there wasn't strong Federal leadership, that all of the States were left to deal with the different aspects of the pandemic in a different way.

I will give you a personal example from the State of Hawaii. You know, access to personal protective equipment, and the chiefs of police and fire talked about, you know, from a Governor's perspective, having our front-line personnel not have access to PPE was just a poor choice. We did not want to see that happen. What was happening is that small States like Hawaii had to increase our orders in order for us to get on the map. We kept getting outbid by California and Washington State and New Jersey for critical PPE. We couldn't access and purchase the equipment that we needed to protect our public servants.

That is just one example that the initial response was poor.

Ms. WATSON COLEMAN. Thank you. I think we are definitely moving in the right direction here now to protect everyone.

Madam Chair, I yield back and I thank you for your indulgence.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. Thank you so much. The gentlewoman yields back.

I just want to make sure that we have recognized all Members. Is there is any Member who has not been recognized?

I would just like to take a moment to ask our witnesses, you know, COVID-19 was something we had never seen before, which required us all to do some things we had never done before. I would just like to hear from each of you how it affected your work, your ability to work on grants and apply for grants. Also how has it been working with the Federal Government and how can FEMA better support you?

Governor Ige, we will start with you.

Governor IGE. Yes, certainly. Thank you so much.

You know, I do think that the biggest challenge in responding to grant opportunities is that, you know, for the past 14 months everything has been all about COVID. So, you know, all of the other kinds of grants and having to apply for grants in this kind of environment where we have an on-going National emergency, I think is a challenge for all States. So, you know, that has made it difficult for the other parts of support that FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security provides.

But I would like to say that the support that most States have gotten from FEMA has been very responsive. You know, the uncertainty of funding and support for our National Guard, for example. Not being able to count on how much Federal support we would get. We are thankful that the Biden administration came in and guaranteed 100 percent cost match for all of the emergency activities from FEMA was a welcome commitment. You know, it is hard to plan not knowing whether we will get no FEMA support, 100 percent FEMA support, or 25/75. That has made it difficult for all States.

Other than that FEMA has been proactive and responsive to our needs. Most recently we see a sea change in transparency and responsiveness from the Biden administration.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. Thank you so much.

Mr. Maples.

Mr. MAPLES. Thank you. Thank you, Chairwoman.

The impact was definitely great on all of us here in New Jersey, from dealing with it sort-of on the forefront for the country as far as the amount of cases and deaths and issues that we were dealing with, but then also preparing for those multiple tiers.

The good news for us we have really focused on flexibility and our strategic implementation to deal with multiple threats or multiple incidents and issues at one time. We do that in partnership with our OEM colleagues, the Office of Emergency Management of the State Police. In doing so, have some of the relationships in place with FEMA and our regional representatives and everybody in place.

So we were in a position to deal with it, however, I think that was a tsunami for all of us in that whether you talk about PPE shortages, whether you talk about some of the existing other programs that are out there where all the sudden our people are remote, been dealing with some of those challenges. So it did impact us. I am proud and happy to say that we were able to get through that. I think we have been almost at 100 percent of capability throughout this, with some hiccups, but we punched through those hiccups and, as the great philosopher Mike Tyson says, everybody has a plan until you get punched in the face. We got punched, but we are hopefully punching back here in New Jersey.

So thank you.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. Thank you so much.

Chief Rolón.

Chief ROLÓN. I think—

Chairwoman DEMINGS. Chief, you are muted. OK, OK, we can hear you.

Chief ROLÓN. Thank you.

I have to say, just one time we have to give credit to the FEMA representatives who work closest to us at the local level. They were there, they were supporting us every step of the way. What happened above that, at the Federal level, could be deemed a different story. But I am telling you, the way the stakeholders work with everyone to support the needs of the public safety profession—and I couldn't be more proud of the men and women of police and fire who know that they were risking their lives or their loved ones, went out there and did their jobs. They did not have the luxury to not respond to a call for services, they did not have the luxury to say, you know what, let me think about it before I take that call. They did so knowing that they were putting their lives at risk. So on a personal note I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the members of public safety and the heroics that they performed during the COVID initial phase where the unknown was dominating everything.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. Thank you so much, Chief.

Chief Altman.

Chief ALTMAN. To copy the Chief's comments, we were lucky in a position ourselves with our local hospitals and our local health departments. We were able to get a lot of PPE. Like you were saying, FEMA on the local level has been great to us. We were able to operate 100 percent the whole time, never missed a beat. We obviously made adjustments in how we respond to calls and how we enter into homes and nursing facilities. Our community has a lot of nursing homes and a lot of retirement communities. So that was a huge challenge for us.

But on the local level we were put in a position running a large amount of calls. Our members and our police and our fire said we are up to the task and we never hit a level. We got close, but, as Chief said, we had some hiccups along the way, but we never missed a beat and were able to perform up to 100 percent at all times.

So I think we were really focused and everything was handled on the local level very well.

Thank you.

Chairwoman DEMINGS. With that, I want to thank the witnesses for your valuable testimony and for what you do every day to make sure that we are ready and to properly respond to anything that threatens us.

I also want to thank the Ranking Member and the Members of this subcommittee for your questions.

The Members of the subcommittee may have additional questions for the witnesses and we ask that you respond expeditiously in writing to those questions.

Without objection, the committee record shall be kept open for 10 days.

Hearing no further business, the subcommittee stands adjourned. Thank you all so much.

[Whereupon, at 1:49 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

