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DEPARTMENTS OF TRANSPORTATION, AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS FOR 2026

HEARINGS

BEFORE A

SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE DEPARTMENTS OF TRANSPORTATION, AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES

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DOUG DISRUD, AVERY PIERSON,
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Subcommittee Staff

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DEPARTMENTS OF TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS FOR 2026

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4, 2025.

FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

WITNESS

MR. CHRIS ROCHELEAU, ACTING ADMINISTRATOR, FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

Mr. WOMACK. This hearing will come to order. It is 10 o'clock. And as per our disciplined approach, we like to start things on time around here. I know that runs a bit counter to some of the other activities of the Congress, but not here.

Today we welcome testimony from Chris Rocheleau, Acting Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration.

Administrator Rocheleau, thank you for joining us today as we review the FAA's budget request for the coming fiscal year.

We have seen air travel rebound since the pandemic with passenger numbers now consistently exceeding pre-pandemic levels across our aviation system.

Aviation remains a critical driver of economic growth. Commercial aviation contributes more than a trillion dollars to our economy, and new technologies promise to deliver more opportunities while improving the quality of life for all Americans.

I am particularly excited to see how advancements in the aviation sector provide more opportunities in areas of high growth, like the district that I represent in northwest Arkansas.

However, rapid growth brings challenges, and we have seen that very subject in the last few months. We must acknowledge the recent aviation accidents that have renewed scrutiny of our safety systems. The tragic crash that occurred on January 29 at Reagan National is still fresh on our minds—a sobering reminder of the real-life consequences when multiple parts of our National Airspace System falter.

Incidents like this, along with the Alaska Airlines door plug failure, multiple near misses in the air and on the ground, and a slew of general aviation accidents, make it clear that our work to strengthen oversight, training, and coordination is far from finished. Safety must remain our shared, unyielding priority.

Our airspace is becoming more crowded and more complex. The infrastructure we rely on is reaching the end of its useful life.

This committee must take a hard look at how we fund the maintenance and replacement of infrastructure and equipment that create the backbone of our aviation system. We must work together to ensure that all aviation can flourish while maintaining the highest possible standards of safety and efficiency for the millions of passengers who fly every day.

Your extensive aviation experience will be vital as we navigate these issues together. I know a safe and efficient National Airspace System is your number one priority. It is also ours.

The President's request for FAA is $22 billion, a 5 percent increase above the enacted 2025 level, with much of the increase going toward operations and facilities and equipment, including your new Project LIFT, which I am sure you will tell us about in your testimony.

However, this budget doesn't contemplate the scale of improvements Secretary Duffy has announced that are necessary. More detail and information will be required for us to fully consider this eventual request. We cannot repeat the NextGen boondoggle where we allowed a program to drag on for decades while technology outpaced its implementation.

If this committee is asked to consider additional funding, with the expectation the FAA can complete procurement or deployment through innovative contracts, the FAA must do better than it did under IIJA. From that bill, $2.5 billion for facilities and equipment remains unobligated.

Mr. Rocheleau, as we develop our 2026 bill, I intend to work with you, your colleagues at the FAA, and Secretary Duffy, along with the aviation community, to ensure that we continue to support the safest, most complex aviation system in the world.

Mr. Administrator, I look forward to our discussion today and hearing from you about the FAA's current and pending work. We want to know how you plan to modernize the air traffic system, address staffing challenges, and encourage safety advancements and innovation. I am confident that we can work together to support the critical missions of the Federal Aviation Administration.

Now I would like to recognize my good friend and the ranking member from South Carolina, Mr. Clyburn, for his opening remarks.

Mr. CLYBURN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And welcome, Acting Administrator Rocheleau. I want to thank you for your service as you assume leadership of the FAA under very difficult circumstances.

The purpose of today's hearing is to examine how the FAA is using its current resources and the proposed fiscal year 2026 funding to advance aviation safety.

As Chair Womack just mentioned, last month we had an opportunity to discuss with Secretary Duffy some of the administration's proposed investments to modernize the air traffic control system.

The discussion centered around the air traffic control modernization plan released last month by this administration. While the plan is a great conversation starter, it ignores the realities of cuts to FAA's staff, fair competition, overall cost, and most importantly, how we pay for it.

The FAA's 2026 budget request provides nominal increases to backfill the air traffic controller workforce and sustain the FAA's aging facilities and technology, all of which I support.

While there are proposed resources set aside for modernizing the FAA, I am concerned that they come at the expense of advancing FAA's aviation safety research, engineering, and development programs, which are essential investments to determine the best modernization and safety solutions for the National Airspace System.

And though the 2026 budget request proposes hiring up to 2,500 new air traffic controllers, it does not consider challenges with academy success or retention rates and early retirements among our existing controllers workforce.

Meanwhile, with the constant shifts in tariffs, America is losing the confidence of our partners to deliver and improve the air traffic control system and cost-effective aviation manufacturing.

American businesses, including manufacturers and suppliers, face uncertainty and increased costs as they are left in the dark. Thousands of jobs, many in high-skilled manufacturing and engineering, depend on the ability of United States aircraft manufacturers and suppliers to access global markets on fair and reliable terms. This is especially true for manufacturing in my own district and home State of South Carolina.

Our aviation supply air system requires certainty from our global partners and the trust that we can deliver state of the art transportation and airports.

Mr. Secretary, I strongly support robust investments in aviation, but we need to know that the administration's supplemental air traffic control plan and budget request is backed by action and based on current realities.

I remain concerned that we have yet to see the full potential of existing FAA resources being used to address our most immediate threats brought forward by aging technology and staffing shortfalls at the FAA.

Mr. Chairman, it is our duty on this subcommittee to continue helping the FAA modernize the air traffic control system, and in a year where we need to see more robust investments in FAA my hope is that it does not come at the expense of strengthening safety for other modes of transportation or keeping our seniors and working families housed.

I look forward to learning more about how we can work together to support the advancement of the FAA. I look forward to hearing your testimony and yield the balance of my time.

And I yield back.

Mr. WOMACK. Thank you, Mr. Clyburn.

We are joined today by the overall chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, my good friend, Tom Cole, even though he is still writhing a little bit in pain from a pair of very difficult losses by the Oklahoma Sooners this weekend in baseball and softball, though your gymnastics program is still world class.

The CHAIRMAN. Thunder looks pretty good too.

Mr. WOMACK. And Thunder is not bad, yeah.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for joining us today, and I will recognize you for any opening comments you would like to make.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you. And since you brought up an unrelated matter, I just want to explain those two untimely losses by our OU women.

We had won the World Series four consecutive times. Of course, it is hosted in Oklahoma City. And so we got the team together and said, if we win every year, they are just going to quit coming. So maybe we need to lighten up, let somebody else slip through once, and then you young ladies—because it is a pretty new team. Six new starters out of nine. We graduated a class that had won the championship every single year they were in college. So we are going to let Texas Tech or Texas enjoy one and then they will come back and we will start all over again.

But thank you. I am awfully proud of those young women. They are amazing.

First, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it, Chairman Womack.

And thank you, Ranking Member Clyburn.

Welcome, Administrator Rocheleau, and thank you for coming before us today and, honestly, for your decades of public service in uniform and as a career civil servant as well. We appreciate it. And in the private sector. But you have been around aviation for a long time, done a lot of great things for our country, and I think you were a superb appointment.

As we start the fiscal year, Mr. Administrator, I am focused on providing effective fiscal support to the FAA. We know you need resources to ensure the safety of our national airspace, support American manufacturers and innovators, and invest in infrastructure that improves the efficiency and reliability of our aviation system.

This subcommittee will support your efforts as we develop our fiscal year 2026 budget. This will include addressing some of our aging air traffic infrastructure that is no longer sustainable in its current form and could become an operational risk.

I will reiterate what Chairman Womack stated earlier: Our commitment to safety and security will be steadfast and unified.

We will begin to do this within the confines of the President's budget while we wait to receive your broader air traffic control proposal.

Now, as you know, air traffic infrastructure isn't the only challenging aspect of our National Airspace System. Personnel levels are also a systemic concern, and in particular the men and women who control our skies that are trained at the sole FAA Academy, located in Oklahoma City.

The training provided in Oklahoma City is unmatched, and I appreciated having the opportunity to speak with you several weeks ago about your efforts to improve the completion rate of the talented students who attend the academy.

As we discussed, the academy must be successful, and to be successful it must be properly resourced with the latest technology and the best instructors.

In fiscal year 2024, while I was privileged to be the chairman of this subcommittee, I worked to ensure the academy received a significant increase for air traffic and technical operations training en-

hancements to strengthen the air traffic control system for our trainees.

This committee also ensured that in our final fiscal year 2025 appropriation, we provided funding to train an additional 2,000 air traffic controllers, and I understand your budget request for fiscal year 2026 contemplates pushing that number potentially to as high as 2,500.

As we advance the fiscal year 2026 appropriation, I look forward to working with you and the administration and my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to fund critical safety missions and transportation infrastructure needs for the country.

With that, let me just add, this is a genuinely bipartisan subcommittee. All of us are in the skies together. We all have friends and family that are flying. We all are concerned about rail safety. We are concerned about road safety.

And so I don't find much partisan division here. It is really more about figuring out, as Mr. Clyburn said, the ranking member, what is the right thing to do here? What are the investments we should be making? And for that we are going to rely very heavily on your judgment and your recommendations, and one way or another, we are going to make the investments that we need to make.

Again, I don't like to look at what we did in 2024 and 2025 as kind of one-hit wonders. They need to be a sustained process of investment and improvement that is going to stretch over a number of years.

And I couldn't be prouder of the members of this subcommittee on both sides of the aisle, because I know they have got that kind of commitment. I have worked with a lot of them in different capacities before.

So I think we have the opportunity in this subcommittee to do something really significant to improve the lives of the American people and the safety of the American people, and I think it is something we can do in a bipartisan fashion. So we look forward to your leadership and your cooperation in helping our committee get to where it needs to go.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I will yield back.

Mr. WOMACK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I associate myself with your remarks. It is a shared responsibility and we have a lot of work to do to ensure the safety of the flying public.

Mr. Rocheleau, your full written testimony will be inserted into the record. The chair will now recognize you for your opening comments before we move to questions and answers.

STATEMENT OF CHRIS ROCHELEAU

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Thank you, sir.

Chairman Cole, Chairman Womack, Ranking Member Clyburn, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Administration's Fiscal Year 2026 budget request for the Federal Aviation Administration.

The FAA's mission is to provide the safest, most efficient aerospace system in the world. To fulfill this ongoing responsibility, the President's budget invests in the future of the National Airspace System—or as we refer to it, the NAS—by requesting $22 billion in the 2026 fiscal year. When coupled with the $5 billion in pre-

viously enacted advance annual appropriations, this $27 billion commitment will enable the FAA to fund critical investments needed to keep pace with industry and enhance the safety and efficiency of our National Airspace System.

As part of the Administration's broader modernization effort to build a state of the art air traffic control system, the FAA is requesting a historic $4 billion for our Facilities and Equipment account to enable the agency to address emerging challenges and technological advancements while preserving the integrity of longstanding capabilities.

The President's budget includes a $1 billion request to accelerate the modernization of the FAA's telecommunications infrastructure. The current infrastructure is dependent on outdated technology, which is facing discontinuance from service providers and serves as a significant operational risk to NAS services.

The agency has pivoted to a new initiative to transition rapidly and safely from point-to-point, hardwired circuits into a modern Internet Protocol-based telecommunications network.

This new initiative, spearheaded by Secretary Duffy under President Trump's leadership, will ensure longstanding stability and the operational efficiency needed to both support existing operations and future needs and to meet ever-evolving cybersecurity and resiliency requirements.

The President's budget also requests $450 million to initiate the Radar Replacement Program, a multi-year effort to replace the FAA's aging radar systems.

The FAA owns and operates hundreds of radar systems that are essential detection and monitoring tools for air traffic controllers. These critical systems are facing more frequent structural deficiencies and maintenance-related issues as they get older, causing increased outages, delays, and risks to the system.

The Radar Replacement Program will invest in more advanced radar technology to enhance surveillance capabilities and avoid delays for the flying public.

The FAA is in the midst of a multi-year hiring and training surge to ensure we have the level of certified air traffic controllers needed to meet current and future traffic demands.

In February, Secretary Duffy announced our plan to increase recruitment of the best and the brightest air traffic controllers by streamlining the hiring steps and increasing the starting salary for academy trainees by 30 percent.

This budget request includes $97.3 million to further supercharge the controller workforce and train up to 2,500 new air traffic controllers in fiscal year 2026.

To achieve this goal, the FAA is filling every seat at the Academy, bolstering the Enhanced Air Traffic Collegiate Training Initiative, and offering more opportunities for experienced military controllers to join our workforce.

By addressing the ongoing air traffic controller shortage through this multi-pronged approach, the FAA is working to improve staffing levels and increase the safety of the NAS.

Members of the committee, every day the FAA manages more than 45,000 flights that connect almost 20,000 U.S. airports, and

I appreciate the President and the Secretary's strong support as I proudly lead the dedicated men and women of the FAA.

This budget request upholds our commitment to maintain the safest airspace in the world by investing in our Nation's infrastructure and our workforce to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

We look forward to your support in ensuring the United States remains a global leader in aviation.

I thank you for the opportunity to be here today, and I look forward to your questions.

[The information follows:]

STATEMENT OF
CHRISTOPHER ROCHELEAU, ACTING ADMINISTRATOR
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

HEARING BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS, SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES: THE FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET REQUEST FOR THE FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

JUNE 4, 2025

Chairman Womack, Ranking Member Clyburn, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Administration's Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Budget request for the Federal Aviation Administration.

The FAA's mission is to provide the safest, most efficient aerospace system in the world. To fulfill this ongoing responsibility, the President's Budget invests in the future of the National Airspace System (NAS) by requesting $22.0 billion in the 2026 fiscal year. When coupled with $5.0 billion in previously enacted advance annual appropriations, this $27.0 billion commitment will enable the FAA to fund critical investments needed to keep pace with industry and enhance the safety and efficiency of our national airspace system.

Infrastructure

As part of the Administration's broader modernization initiative to build a state-of-the-art air traffic control system, the FAA is requesting a historic $4.0 billion for our Facilities & Equipment (F&E) account to enable the agency to address emerging challenges and technological advancements while preserving the integrity of long-standing capabilities.

The President's Budget includes a $1.0 billion request to accelerate the modernization of the FAA telecommunications infrastructure. The current infrastructure is dependent on outdated

technology, which is facing discontinuance from service providers and serves as a significant operational risk to NAS services. The agency has pivoted to a new initiative to transition rapidly and safely from point-to-point, hardwired circuits into a modern Internet Protocol (IP)-based telecommunications network. This new initiative spearheaded by Secretary Duffy under President Trump's leadership will ensure long-term stability and the operational efficiency needed to both support existing operations, future needs, as well as meet ever-evolving cybersecurity and resiliency requirements.

The President's Budget also requests $450 million to initiate the Radar Replacement Program, a multi-year effort to replace the FAA's aging radar systems. The FAA owns and operates hundreds of radar systems that are essential detection and monitoring tools for air traffic controllers. These critical systems are facing more frequent structural deficiencies and maintenance-related issues as they get older, causing increased outages, delays, and risk to the system. The Radar Replacement Program will invest in more advanced radar technology to enhance surveillance capabilities and avoid delays for the flying public.

Controller Hiring and Training

The FAA is in the midst of a multi-year hiring and training surge to ensure the level of certified air traffic controllers needed to meet current and future traffic demands. In February, Secretary Duffy announced our plan to increase recruitment of the best and brightest air traffic controllers by streamlining the hiring steps and increasing the starting salary for Academy trainees by 30 percent. This budget request includes $97.3 million to further supercharge the controller workforce and train up to 2,500 new air traffic controllers in FY 2026. To achieve this goal, the FAA is filling every seat at the Academy, bolstering the Enhanced Air Traffic Collegiate

Training Initiative (AT-CTI), and offering more opportunities for experienced military controllers to join the workforce. By addressing the ongoing air traffic controller shortage through this multi-pronged approach, the FAA is working to improve staffing levels and increase the safety of the NAS.

Conclusion

Members of the Committee, every day the FAA manages more than 45,000 flights that connect almost 20,000 U.S. airports, and I appreciate the President and the Secretary's strong support as I proudly lead the dedicated men and women of the Agency. This budget request upholds our commitment to maintain the safest airspace in the world by investing in our Nation's infrastructure and workforce to meet the challenges of tomorrow. We look forward to your support in ensuring the United States remains a global leader in aviation.

Mr. WOMACK. Thank you very much. As I said, your full written testimony will be included in the record. And we will now begin a period of questions and answers.

We will, again, enforce a five-minute rule here, so members are advised to get as quickly to your questions as you possibly can so that you can maximize the amount of time we have available.

I am going to recognize myself for five minutes.

The House and Senate provided about $3.6 billion in our fiscal year 2025 bills. They never got across the finish line. So the CR that we are currently under froze this level at $3.2 billion, I think another reason why we should not be living on continuing resolutions. We lose ground.

Now, the question about sustainability versus modernization. Unfortunately, you can't do one exclusively. Secretary Duffy has outlined his plans for modernization, but you still have to operate a system that you currently have.

How does that work? And how difficult will it be for us to achieve the overall goals of modernization while at the same time providing the sustainable safety systems that we currently have in place? And how is the FAA best equipped to do that?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Thank you, sir, for the question.

Our budget request, in fact, incorporates the needs to continue to sustain what we have in place today. But, clearly, we have seen evidence where the equipment today is, as I stated in my testimony, starting to degrade in our ability to operate the system, and we see outages and delays associated with that equipment.

I am confident in our ability to maintain the system. In fact, I would just share with you all that we had a record-breaking Memorial Day weekend with respect to our ability to manage safely the operations in the National Airspace System.

And at the same time, it is imperative that we invest in the future of our air traffic system. We are spending over 90 percent of our funding right now just on maintaining, sometimes band-aiding some of the equipment that we have.

And so the Secretary's bold vision, under, obviously, the President's direction, is to make sure that we are able to build a new air traffic system to manage what we are dealing with today and the increase in traffic, safely, and at the same time anticipate the needs going forward like drone integration, advanced air mobility, and the like.

The budget that we are proposing today sustains the operations that we have and at the same time enables our success in the future as we think about the new systems that we need to come online.

Mr. WOMACK. You mentioned the $4 billion that is in the request for facilities and equipment. How much of that is strictly sustainability versus how much of that is actually going to go toward the overall cost associated with full modernization?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. You referenced earlier the Project LIFT. One billion dollars of our request is going to go directly to advancing in an expedited fashion that transition from what we call copper wire, or TDM, to an internet protocol-based, or fiber optic transition, that will enable the resiliency, the efficiency of the system, and the ability to make sure that as we increase operations that we will be

able to do that in a consistent manner without the outages and the struggles that we have been facing as we have seen in the news just recently.

Mr. WOMACK. Given your time at the FAA, going all the way back to nearly the turn of the millennium when we started this NextGen project, and we have spent billions of dollars on NextGen, how would you grade—and you heard in my testimony or in my opening remarks about the fact that we got bogged down and the speed of technology was not matching the speed of our ability to improve—if you were giving a letter grade to the NextGen project, how would you grade it? And how much of that $14 billion that we spent on NextGen could have been better spent? Put it that way.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I would certainly agree with the premise that it could have been better spent. As I think about the advancements, today we do have systems in place that NextGen generated like Data Comm, which is texting between controllers and the pilots. Some of those capabilities came online.

At the same time, let's recognize that, for a variety of reasons, that vision was not fully realized, which is why I pivot to what we are trying to do now with this new and bold plan.

When we think about the future, when we think about what we are sustaining today and where we need to go with respect to new technologies, safety technologies and efficiency technologies, this is what we are looking for as we think about this new air traffic modernization plan.

Mr. WOMACK. You didn't give it a letter grade. But can I assume that you are not advocating that it be on the honor roll?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Yes, sir, I can agree to that.

Mr. WOMACK. Fair enough.

Mr. Clyburn.

Mr. CLYBURN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

[Inaudible] which is a relatively small State, but in my congressional district you are going to find Shaw Air Force Base, headquarters to the Ninth Army—or the Ninth Air Force—and headquarters to the Third Army. We have the Marine Air Station, the Columbia Airport, the Charleston International Airport.

All of those air traffic controllers have been in to visit with me about the challenges that they have trying to maintain safety with the way things are currently organized or being implemented, and they are really concerned about the shortages, the resignations, the problem we have getting trained air traffic controllers up to snuff.

How do you plan to do more with less?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I would start by saying I believe the FAA can be a more efficient organization. That is the charge to me by the Secretary, and I believe we can accomplish that goal. We have an amazing, amazing workforce that comes to work every day, as I mentioned. During the Memorial Day holiday is one example of that.

But to the center of your question, what we are talking about is the ability to continue to sustain what we have today and at the same time accelerate, whether it is on the controller workforce—and by the way, it is not just the controller workforce. We are also talking about maintainers, safety inspectors, engineers, all of the

people that go into our ecosystem to make sure there is a safe and efficient air transportation system.

And while we are looking at the workforce piece of it, we are also looking at modernizing the equipment that is so essential to what your constituents are talking about with respect to safe and efficient airspace in the system.

We are approaching it from a multi-pronged approach. Part of it has to do with the workforce. And, again, supercharging the controllers is so critical to our ability to manage the traffic we have today and what we expect to see in the future.

Mr. CLYBURN. Well, looking at your plan, I am still trying to figure out the budget numbers. And the amount of money being requested to do this seems not to line up with the amount of work that you have got to do, especially in keeping with all of the—or the lack of numbers coming into the system. And I have not seen what I consider to be a definitive plan on how you are going to increase the number of air traffic controllers. I forgot the number. Some ungodly number in terms of the shortages that we currently have.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Yes, sir.

This year we are projecting to need 2,000 air traffic controllers through our system. Just a few months ago we realized we may not hit that. Thanks to the Secretary and his leadership, we have supercharged that, so we will get 2,000 people into the training academy—which, by the way, Chairman Cole, is a gem for us when we think about what we are talking about there in Oklahoma City and the ability to put controllers through that system.

As it relates to the technology plan, again, the billion dollars is to make sure that we have that resiliency in the fiber optics so that there is good connectivity between the facilities themselves, and then the additional moneys would go to, in fact, accelerating the Radar Replacement Program.

When we talk about the larger plan that the Secretary so artfully outlines, it is going to be critical that we work with Congress to understand, to lay out our plan.

So going from TDM to IP, from copper wires to fiber optics, to new radar replacements, new radios for the controllers so they can talk to the pilots, and then, of course, facilities, all of those things are going into this approach to modernize the airspace system.

Mr. CLYBURN. Well, thank you.

My time is almost expired, but I would like to know at some point, Mr. Chairman, whether or not we plan to utilize those colleges and universities to supplement that which I know is great training out of Oklahoma City. However, in terms of numbers, the volume we need, I think we ought to take a look at those colleges and universities.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Yes, sir.

Mr. WOMACK. I thank the ranking member.

I now recognize the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Mr. Cole from Oklahoma.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And I probably shouldn't say this before I get into my questions in front of somebody as shrewd as my friend the ranking member, but when I think ahead about negotiations that will come if we are

going to avoid a CR and get to a successful conclusion, I always look, where are the things in common that the two sides can set aside differences on and come around? I think this is one of those things.

Mr. CLYBURN. Absolutely.

The CHAIRMAN. We are all very interested in what it takes to fly safely. It is important commercially. It is much more important, obviously, in terms of lives.

So I would just advise you and advise our former colleague to be ready to take advantage of that opportunity down the road. This is one where we will work together and try and make a significant investment to move us materially toward the goals that you have outlined.

Your budget proposal increases the Facilities and Equipment account in order to upgrade the system for air traffic facilities. Does your request include improvements at the academy to ensure that the students are actually training on the equipment that you intend for them to be using in the years ahead?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Yes, sir, it does. In fact, as we talked about recently, our effort to supercharge the hiring through the academy with controllers, what we have been able to do—and, again, giving credit to the Secretary for accelerating and encouraging us to work hard—we didn't think we were going to hit the 2,000 controllers this year. So we have shortened the time frame by which we hire those controllers—academy attendees—through the system by five months.

In fact, as a quick story, as we look for the best and brightest, we had an individual recently that in 44 days, from start to finish, got into the Academy, got an Academy start date.

So that system is really working. Now, that is not going to be the case for everyone, but that is encouraging there.

The budget request we have does, in fact, accommodate and consider what we want to do with respect to getting up to 2,500 people through the Oklahoma City academy this year in addition to the enhanced CTI trainings that we are doing with universities around the U.S.

The CHAIRMAN. That is terrific.

Just toward that goal of reaching 2,500, when you and I had our visit, we also talked about the failure rate, because we lose about a third of those students over the course of their studies.

In some ways you expect that. It is a pretty rigorous, very demanding profession. What might look attractive at the beginning as you get into it may not be your cup of tea as you understand how difficult and challenging this job is.

But having said that, I am curious about, number one, as you stair step up anything additional you need. And, again, I am like you, I commend the Secretary for increasing that pay and making this a more attractive option for the kind of people we want coming there.

But what are you thinking about doing in addition to help those students that are there so that we have a higher success rate and don't lose them?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Thank you for the question.

As part of this initiative, I would highlight two efforts that we put in place there.

First and foremost, in the first roughly five weeks of training, there is a basic course—what we will call Air Traffic 101—that we do not need certified professional controllers to teach.

And so, there we have an ability to bring in professional instructors to help that. So, we are augmenting the instructor workforce at the Academy, and we think that will be helpful for the evaluation period as people get closer to graduation.

In addition to that, one of the things that the Secretary had heard in his recent visit back to Oklahoma, was that some of the students were looking for a little extra time on the weekend for training.

And so we are now offering tutoring on the weekend with the use of high-definition simulators, which is going to improve the graduation rate probably up to 30 percent. Because at the end of the day, to get the throughput, to get the controllers to the boards that we need, we want to make sure that that failure rate of roughly 35 percent these days, because it is an incredibly demanding profession, that we get that down to, say, 25 percent, maybe even lower than that.

Through those two initiatives alone, we are trying to make sure that we get a better throughput and a better graduation rate.

The CHAIRMAN. That is great.

Well, my time is almost up, and I certainly respect the chairman on that. Just one thing: it is not a question, but I am sure you are thinking, given the fact that you are going to increase, as you implied, the number of instructors. Because if we are going to move it up, you have got to have more people on the ground. You are comfortable you can do that? And that is basically a yes or no.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. WOMACK. I thank the gentleman from Oklahoma.

And not to belabor the point necessarily on air traffic control, but it is one thing to get a certified air traffic controller, but it is a whole nother thing to certify them or to prepare them for whatever assignment they are going to get. And that could be a pretty lengthy process as well. Is that correct?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. That is correct, sir. It can take anywhere from two to three years to get a certified professional controller through the system and qualified at the facility they are going to be working at.

Mr. WOMACK. Mrs. Torres.

Mrs. TORRES. Thank you, Chairman.

And thank you for being here also.

As I mentioned to Secretary Duffy a few weeks ago, we are seeing a troubling rise in near misses, including navigation systems shutting down themselves while a plane is attempting to land. These are serious close calls that could have ended in terrible disasters.

These aren't isolated incidents. They signal a deeper issue with the FAA's ability to provide the strong, consistent safety oversight that our aviation system demands.

Pilots today are operating in increasingly complex conditions where even small breakdowns—mechanical issues, miscommunication, ground movement risks—can easily escalate a situation. It is a lot of stress for them.

That is why we need an FAA that is fully staffed, well supported, and fully focused on its mission. That is protecting lives. I assume that continues to be its number one mission.

Acting Administrator, you recently said in a town hall that the FAA will be leaner, and that statement in the current environment is a little bit alarming. A leaner FAA raises real concerns about the capacity and readiness.

You took some responsibility for what was missed in the recent DCA incident, saying: "I take that seriously and I take that on myself. I returned to the FAA just two months ago and I care about the National Airspace System for safety and the workforce."

I sent you my questions in advance so that there would be no concerns or mistakes. What immediate steps is the FAA taking to reduce near misses and protect safety on the ground and in the air?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Thank you for the question.

Yes, first and foremost, let me just start by saying the system is incredibly safe, and that matters to me personally, it matters to my leadership team that I meet with on a weekly basis, and it matters to the 45,000 people that come to work every day for the FAA.

As it relates specifically to what we are doing now, as a result of the tragic crash of American Airlines 5342 a few months ago, we initiated a very aggressive effort to look across the Nation for what we refer to internally as hot spots at 20 locations around the Nation to ensure that we were picking up on the data that we may have missed previously. We are using new tools like AI and machine learning.

Mrs. TORRES. But safety incidents, sir, haven't stopped. So what can we aggressively change today, yesterday, tomorrow to stop these incidents, these near misses?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I will give you three quick examples.

First and foremost, Las Vegas, Nevada. We identified early on that the vertical and lateral boundaries for helicopters and fixed-wing (traffic) were not where they needed to be. And traffic advisories calling out controllers to pilots to telling them about helicopters in the area that was something else we did immediately when we identified those issues.

In the L.A. Basin we are looking at the mix of traffic there between helicopters and fixed-wing in some of the more dense air traffic areas there.

And then finally in Alaska, where weather is so important to the people in Alaska, we are testing new technologies to bring additional satellite weather into that area too.

Mrs. TORRES. Have you raised these concerns with the Secretary?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I talk to the Secretary regularly and he has impressed upon me——

Mrs. TORRES. But specifically on these issues that you identified?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Yes. Yes, we have.

Mrs. TORRES. Okay. So how is the FAA reassuring our pilots and our crews and passengers that every aircraft is held to the highest safety standard?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. And I really appreciate that, because in addition to what we call this hot spots review, we actually had a series of engagements with the community.

The first one was general aviation, business aviation. Then we moved to the helicopter community. Then we moved to ramp workers to make sure the airport safety on the ground was well done. And then we just finished recently with the airlines themselves.

So, we have engaged directly with the operators within the system.

Mrs. TORRES. I am very concerned about the software mechanics, engineers, whatever we want to call them, the people that are working on the system that was launched in the 1970s. You can't bring in a modern worker to replace that worker.

And I think I am out of time. So you and I will continue this conversation in the next opportunity.

And I yield back.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Be happy to.

Mr. WOMACK. Thank you.

Mr. Strong.

Mr. STRONG. Thank you, Chairman Womack and Ranking Member Clyburn, for holding this hearing today.

I would also like to thank the subcommittee staff for their hard work. It does not go unnoticed.

Mr. Rocheleau, thank you for being here today.

My district in north Alabama is home to Huntsvillle International Airport. I am proud to say Huntsville has been named the best small airport in the country for the second consecutive year.

Airports can find it difficult to plan long-term infrastructure projects when they don't have clarity on funding timelines or FAA approvals.

Mr. Administrator, has the FAA considered establishing response deadlines for project approvals, allowing them to move forward if no determination is issued within a set time frame?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Yes, sir. I know by law—and let me just say, I have been to Huntsville a number of times, both in the Air Force and within the FAA, and it is amazing how Huntsville has grown.

With respect to timelines specifically, reauthorization requires that deadline to be 45 days. In addition to that, we have the NEPA requirements, which is a year for an environmental assessment and then two years for the EIS, the environmental impact statement, and we work closely to that within the Airports division.

Mr. STRONG. Thank you.

I serve as the co-chair of the Army Aviation Caucus alongside Ranking Member DeLauro. I would like to express my deepest sympathies for those impacted by the horrific collision at DCA on January the 29th.

In the aftermath, the Army's use of Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast—affectionately known as ADS-B—transponders and information communicated to the DCA air traffic control has come under focus.

Reports from more recent close calls have highlighted that even through Army aircraft have been transmitting ADS-B information and haven't deviated from approved flight paths, air traffic control has issued go-arounds to commercial airliners because they have been unsure of the helicopter's position.

Mr. Administrator, does air traffic control utilize ADS-B data for deconfliction of aircraft at DCA? If so, is it the sole means of tracking aircraft or does it use a mix of different systems?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Yes, sir. We use a mix of systems. We use ADS-B. We also use radar. And we use visual separation as well, as appropriate.

Mr. STRONG. Does using the mixed systems, does this create an ability or degrade ATC's ability to ascertain the aircraft's position?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I think the multiple systems offer the controllers the ability to manage the air spaces as efficiently but safely as possible.

Mr. STRONG. Despite previous actions to increase funding for the FAA's Office of Commercial Space Transportation, the industry still faces long delays in licensing for launch and reentry.

What is the FAA's strategy to streamline licensing while maintaining public safety? Are there any specific tools or systems the FAA is investing in to ensure regulations don't ground our space industry?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I am very excited about the commercial space industry, and it is certainly one of the areas that I have been focused on in coming back to the agency. We did 142 launches last year. We are expecting close to 200 this year. And it is really an exciting time.

With regard to what we are using to streamline, we recently issued Part 450 and we are working with the space operators to better understand how we can do that more efficiently going forward.

And with respect to airspace, we use what we call the Space Data Integrator. Our air traffic people work very closely with the launch operations to make sure that we can minimize the time that we need to open the airspace for the launches so that we can have smooth transitions between commercial airlines and commercial space launches.

Mr. STRONG. What steps is the FAA taking to integrate space launches into the national airspace center effectively? I know you have mentioned a couple there.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Yes, sir.

The Space Data Integrator that is located out at the FAA's Command Center is really a key element of that, because as we see normal air traffic operations within the system and we see the increase in space launch operations, we want to make sure we deconflict, first and foremost, and second, minimize the impact to the traveling public through airlines.

Mr. STRONG. Thank you.

I know that Chairman Cole and Chairman Womack mentioned this. You look at this budget, it is not a budget that is divided partisan. Four billion for equipment account. One billion for modernization of telecommunication network, Radar Replacement Program, hiring and training, add 2,500 new ATC. That is what Amer-

ica is looking for. We want to be sure it is safe. I thank you for your efforts.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. WOMACK. Thank you.

Mr. Quigley.

Mr. QUIGLEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Administrator, how many total FAA employees have taken the President's early retirement opportunity?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. How many total employees?

Those numbers are not finalized yet, largely because we are processing through what we call DRP 2. We had our first tranche of people that came through, and I believe that was roughly 700 that applied for the DRP. And now we are going through that process for the second one.

We will roll those numbers up as we go through. I am in constant contact with my leadership team to understand what the impacts of those will be.

And I would just note that in a number of those cases we have been able to talk to people who have expressed interest and negotiate their time if they, in fact, do want to leave.

Mr. QUIGLEY. But for air traffic controllers, for example, they have been saying that there have been no cuts to them, but how many have taken early retirement?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. There have absolutely been no cuts, and the controllers themselves are not eligible. They are not eligible for early retirement.

If anything, what the Secretary and I have done is incentivized the people who are retirement eligible. So, if you have done 25 years and you are 51, 52, 53 years old, we are giving those senior controllers that we need right now another 20 percent increase to their base salary just to stick around for another couple or three years.

Mr. QUIGLEY. I just wanted to confirm that, because we have heard there have been no cuts to air traffic controllers. The concern is we have heard that there have been cuts to those workers who help specifically some of the critical safety functions that support the front-line workers.

With the dismissal of probationary employees and early retirement buyout program, we are hearing that about 12 percent of the aeronautical information specialists have left the FAA or are poised to leave. These are informational specialists who update charts, maps, and key data after disruption or disturbances in airspace like weather or a collision.

This is accurate we have been told and how do you plan to make up for those losses?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. So, again, we have not stopped hiring any safety critical positions, any of them. And the people——

Mr. QUIGLEY. But those people have left or are leaving, so you are lower than where you were.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Sir, there are people that support the critical safety positions, and that is part of the ongoing assessment that I do with my leadership team to make sure that if we have people that have accepted early retirement that we are managing through

that to ensure that there are those services to our controllers and our maintenance people and the like.

Mr. QUIGLEY. How do you do that? If you have lost 12 percent of the people who do those critical functions, who is doing it in the meantime?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Well, there are a few ways. First and foremost, we are assessing how we are doing that and what can we do better.

For instance, going from a paper-based process to an electronic-based process, that is one of them. Making sure that we are hiring for critical safety positions and leveraging the talent that we do have that is staying and making sure that they can both do the critical safety functions as well as those support functions.

Mr. QUIGLEY. And, respectfully, you call them critical safety functions. Wouldn't it make more sense to have a plan, an assessment of how to replace them or how to phase them out, rather than just do this so dramatically at the start? It is sort of managing your own crisis rather than planning to implement a program like this.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. We have been very intentional on how we work through this, recognizing that, as I mentioned, there are some people that may express interest in leaving earlier, and we can sit down with them and work through what that timeline looks like, so we can plan for what is behind them.

And I would just say this. The people that are leaving, while we will miss them because they have been amazing public servants, there are a lot of talented people right behind them that are going to come in and pick up the pace.

Mr. QUIGLEY. I just have to belabor it. Wouldn't it have made more sense to have those discussions, see who is going to take this up, plan on who is going to take their place, and phase it in as you go through this rather than do the cuts and then come back and figure out how do we manage that?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Even though we may look back and may have approached it a different way, there was an opportunity to allow people to leave that wanted to leave and at the same time negotiate with them for a smooth transition.

Mr. QUIGLEY. I yield back.

Mr. WOMACK. Chairman Rogers.

Mr. ROGERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Secretary's new state of the art air traffic control system is long overdue. It seems like it is almost every other day that we are having some problem with air traffic control in this country with souls in the air under our care.

This plan is holistic and it is big and it is expensive: replacing antiquated telecommunications with new fiber, wireless, and satellite technologies at over 4,600 sites; 25,000 new radios; 475 new voice switches; and so on and so forth; replacing 618 radars, which are past their life cycle already; addressing runway safety by increasing the number of airports with a service awareness initiative to 200; building six new air traffic control centers for the first time since the 1960s; replacing towers and TRACONs; installing new modern hardware and software for all air traffic facilities to create a common platform system throughout towers, TRACONs, and centers; and then the special problems in Alaska with adding 174 new

weather stations just in Alaska. This is a huge undertaking at great cost.

I have got a mechanical question that Chairman Womack opened up. How are you going to do this? Are we going to build a new system separate and apart from the present system and one day when you get the new one built you will switch one to "on" and the other one to "off"? How is that going to work?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Thank you for the question. And there is no doubt we are looking for a real investment in this. And I believe it is a true investment in the U.S. and the future when I think of the aviation industry as an economic generator of over a trillion dollars and 10 million U.S. good-paying jobs.

As it relates specifically to our plan that you so well outlined, a big piece of that is being able to sustain the operations we have today. I can talk a little bit about Newark, where we are transitioning from the copper wires, the old-fashioned telephone lines, over to fiber optic cables. That is just one example of where we are taking what we have in place and we are transitioning into a new system as it relates to radars and facilities.

All of those things are going to be part of this where we continue to operate the system safely every day, and then we switch over, as you described, into these new modern systems with intentional, deliberate testing to make sure the redundancy and the resiliency is there to ensure the safety of the traveling public.

Mr. ROGERS. Would you be using some equipment under the current——

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I am sorry, what equipment?

Mr. ROGERS. Will you be mixing in pieces from the new system to the old system and vice versa?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. The whole idea is to replace the system, but that is going to take some time to get there. Yesterday we issued a request for information for the best and brightest companies to come in and help us do that transition. I think that is a real opportunity for us.

But the plan, as we described it earlier, is to essentially continue to operate the system as we do today and then switch over to the new technologies.

Mr. ROGERS. So it will be all new equipment——

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Yes, sir.

Mr. ROGERS [continuing]. In the new system, none of the old?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. No more floppy disks or paper strips.

Mr. ROGERS. So you will turn the switch to "on" and take the shovels and do away with the old system?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. It is a little more complicated than that, but we will switch it over to the new system.

Mr. ROGERS. All right. Good luck.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Thank you, sir.

Mr. ROGERS. Thank you. Yield back.

Mr. WOMACK. And they will be doing it while you are in the air, Mr. Rogers, I am pretty confident.

Mrs. Watson Coleman.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Thank you, sir.

Good morning to you.

I have a couple of questions that have to do with the Newark airport. I also have some questions regarding just air traffic controllers in general.

Could you just tell me, what is the starting salary for an air traffic controller?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. It really depends on the facility. We bring them in as an Academy student in roughly that $45,000 to $60,000 range. As I mentioned earlier, we have incentivized new Academy people to join us with a 30 percent increase.

But when you get to a facility, it really depends on the facility. It can range anywhere from the 60s and 70s all the way up to a fully certified professional controller can be in the 145 to 150 range.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. And that depends upon how large the airport is, how busy it is, et cetera?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Correct. There are levels, yes, ma'am.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Where is the Newark airport in that sort of——

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I will have to take the IOU on what level the controllers are at Newark. I should know that. But I do know that that is well understood for the tower specifically, I am not sure the level of the tower there. And then obviously we have the controllers at Philadelphia Area C, which is controlling some of the incoming to Newark.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. The problems with the Newark airport delays——

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Yes, ma'am.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN [continuing]. What percentage of that delay or those delays were due to staffing issues, staffing shortages, and what percentage of it is due to infrastructure that is old and needs to be replaced?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. There are three primary reasons for the delays.

First and foremost is weather, and that is the constant one. The second is the outages that we were experiencing that we are working through and fixing now. And then the third is staffing.

Staffing continues to be a challenge for us. We have 27 certified controllers that are operating in Philadelphia Area C now to manage the air traffic going into Newark. And we have 22, including six new people going through training now.

So, we will be healthier towards the end of this summer for Newark specifically and that Area C. I am confident that the delays will be reduced going in there.

In fact, we have been working with the airlines through our recent delay reduction effort. We will be here shortly, probably next week, at a 34 rate, which we will be able to manage safely through that air traffic system with the controllers.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. So is it infrastructure, is it congestion, or is it staffing that is going to delay Newark being up and ready at its capacity in October as opposed to July, August, September?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I would say I am confident that by the October timeframe, the technology issues will be resolved. The Secretary has been very clear with me that we need to fix this, and we are fixing this now. The second piece to that is the staffing. By October, we will be very healthy in there at staffing levels that we

need. And then, of course, the weather is always going to be one of those challenges.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. So I know, sir, that there were not cuts to the air traffic controllers, but as my colleague mentioned, there were cuts to the staff that support it, those functions. And I am wondering, to what extent—I understand that in February Elon Musk's DOGE folks came there with their chainsaw, and as a result, 400 people were let go or went on their own. Is that accurate?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I would clarify by saying that there were 400 probationary employees that were terminated, 360 of which returned to the FAA.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Why did they return, because they were—because it was wrong to let them go? It was——

Mr. ROCHELEAU. It was a court case. My understanding, the court case ended up having those probationary employees be returned to duty.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. So I know that you have been in service in your capacity for quite a while. Were you at all consulted when those 400 people were identified to be released, and did you have any input on whether or not that was going to impact your ability to do what we all agree is your primary function, is to make sure planes don't crash——

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Right.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN [continuing]. Into one another or into grounds.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Right. I certainly was in the chair. I have been in the chair for 4 months. I was in the chair when those decisions were made and was consulted as to how we were going to manage through that period of time. Again, I would say that we preserved the safety critical positions, and we made sure that as we were working through the probationary employee situation that we were managing the workload. These folks were there for probably less than a year, obviously for the probationary terminations. But at the end of the day, what we did was we consulted with the leadership teams in each one of those lines of business.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Thank you, Mr. Administrator. Apparently they are needed, though, in that capacity, and so I am glad that they are back.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. WOMACK. Thank you.

Sheriff Rutherford.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member.

And, Acting Administrator Rocheleau, thank you for being here this afternoon to talk about some of this. I want to go back to the ATCs and talk a little bit about that as well, because it is very important to my district where we have the Jacksonville air route traffic control center for all of northeast Florida, which has that funnel effect and it is incredibly busy, 160,000 square miles of airspace, 20 military installations, 200 civilian airports. How these folks do it, I have no idea. It really is—incredibly proud of those guys and gals and what they do.

I was really happy to see this $97 million to hire 2,500. Question though, how much of that are we going to be able to accomplish? I am concerned about that. One of the things that I would like to

ask in finding those people, the DEI biologics assessments that were being used previously for selection of ATCs, air traffic controllers, that, you know, were part of the DEI process before, which I think 1,000 that were proficient but refused hiring because of their biologics were then—filed a lawsuit. Of that 1,000, are we going back to those folks? I know we have gone back to performance-based selecting, correct?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Yes, sir, that is correct.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Okay.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Merit-based approach to hiring.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Right. Right. And so, have we gone back to those that were rejected who were proficient but rejected simply because of their race back, you know, 3 years ago, whenever that was?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I am not specifically aware of those individuals, or an effort to go back to them. I will be happy to take the IOU and get back to you and your staff to make sure that we follow up on that.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. I mean, if they are still willing to come, that would be a great source to tap into, I would think. And I think what you are going to find also is that 35 percent failure rate in the academy is going to go down significantly when it is more based on merit than biological information. So I am glad to see you all moving in that direction.

Can you talk a little bit about—a little more on—what specifically can we do to help you with this process? I mean, we are talking about $39,000 per student of the—you know, you take $97 million, that ain't a lot of money for 2,500 students. That is $39,000 a head. Is that going to be enough, and are there other things that we can do to help you in this process?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Well, first and foremost, I appreciate the support. Clearly, working with Congress is going to be critical to our success going forward. We have budgeted—we have programmed for up to 2,500 in our current budget request with the $97.3 million.

I would also make a very important point here as it relates to the throughput. We have truncated the process to get additional people into the Academy itself, and we have added instructors to provide the basic instruction, as we continue to use the certified controllers to do the evaluation piece. We are confident that we are going to see a better graduation rate coming out of there. Part of that is the tutoring piece that I talked about earlier as well. I am confident in what we have put in place to be able to meet our goals this year. It is aggressive, I will acknowledge that.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Is that going to be official tutoring over the weekends and that sort of thing that you mentioned earlier?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. We will have tutors available, but we will also have the high-definition simulators for people to go and practice.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Right.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I learned that in the military when we did a lot of that. Those simulators will be very valuable to those people who want to put in the extra work.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Let me switch over to some of the work that they are going to be dealing with. You know, particularly looking

at your long career at FAA and in the Air Force, I am sure you have seen, you know, areas where there is a lot of progress as well as a lot of stagnation within the aviation sector. And part of the future of aviation is drone and how that is going to fit into the commercial space.

Now, I see the budget deals with some of that in a modest amount, and I am appreciative of that. But let me ask you: Can you share with this subcommittee a bit about your vision for how the drone commercial space is going to fit together, because it is coming quickly.

Mr. WOMACK. I will give you a few seconds to answer the question.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Thank you.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Oh, I am sorry.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. It is coming quickly, and it was one of the reasons why I was so excited to come back to the FAA bringing new innovative technologies into the airspace. That includes drones; that includes advanced air mobility, the eVTOLs or air taxis; and it includes commercial space as well.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Thank you.

I am sorry, Mr. Chairman. I went over my time. I yield back.

Mr. WOMACK. No worries.

Mr. Espaillat.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Acting Administrator Rocheleau, for being here.

I think we all acknowledge here that the stakes are very high with regards to air safety, and the FAA is in the business of air safety. I myself, in addition to other Members, I would say a bipartisan group of five Members were on a plane whose wing was clipped at Reagan while taxiing. This is just a few months after the horrible accident that took so many lives, so safety is really in danger for the American public.

And we had Secretary Duffy testify, and he acknowledged that the skinny budget fell severely short of the kind of investment that is needed to meet the challenge of safety, and we see an increase, but it still falls short of the $31 billion that are required to ensure that the American public is safe while traveling.

As we approach the holiday season and other important seasons, we approach the World Cup, the Olympics, there is going to be a substantial increase in travel here, and we are not ready. In fact, some of the changes that need to be made are going to take some time, so we may even—they may even require a supplemental budget.

So my question first is, do you acknowledge that we are short at the $22 billion level, and do you feel that we need a supplemental to meet the demand?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Thanks for the question. There is a lot of activity. Looking forward to the World Cup and a number of other things.

As we have programmed here in the budget request, I believe this is appropriate for what we need to do with respect to moving from copper wire to fiber optic. I believe it is appropriate to supercharge controllers to get in the system, and it will take some time.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. How much time will it take?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. For?

Mr. ESPAILLAT. For us to meet the demand, you know, for the World Cup, for the Olympics, for heavy travel during the holidays.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I should have started with this: The system is safe and will continue to be safe. We will make sure of that. The 45,000 people at the FAA will make sure of that.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. I know we have gaps in air traffic controller supervision of air travel and landing and takeoff in Newark, and severely putting people in danger. How long is the overall plan to be ready and really at an optimum?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. We will maintain the safety of the system. We may slow it down, but we will maintain the safety of the system.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Can you give me a timeframe?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I believe, particularly engaging with Congress here, when we talk about the Secretary's plan for a big, bold—and the President is a champion of this as well—for a new air traffic system, we are looking at a three to four year period. I believe we can get there even quicker.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Do you think that will require a supplemental budget—that I think will be bipartisan. I think everybody wants safety here.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I wouldn't disagree. We are going to need Congress' help for additional funding.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. So you will need a supplemental, okay.

My next question is, Elon Musk brazenly pushed for the FAA to use his Starlink satellite for air traffic control, as has been reported. Do you ever have—have you ever had a conversation with Mr. Musk or personnel at the White House or DOGE staff about potentially using Starlink for air traffic control systems?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I have never had a conversation with Elon Musk. I have worked very closely to make sure that as we experiment with new capabilities, including satellite technologies like Starlink——

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Well, have you had a conversation with the White House staff or even with DOGE staff about using Starlink?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. No, sir.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Okay. Thank you so much.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. WOMACK. Mr. Gonzales.

Mr. GONZALES. Thank you, Chairman.

Thank you, Administrator, for testifying today.

I want to talk about safety. We often talk about aircrafts falling out of the sky, which is important, or getting clipped as you are taxiing, but I am worried about these increased amounts of unmanned aircraft systems, UAS, drones, that are falling out of the sky. We just saw Ukraine conduct one of the most significant operations of the Russian-Ukraine war.

And with a small amount of money, with a small amount of quadcopters, they were able to decimate Russia's long-range strategic bombers, okay, to the tune of billions of dollars. I am worried about that. I mean, that is not a what-if. That is now. That is currently, right now, what is happening. My question is pretty simple: Is our U.S. airspace safe from drone threats?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I would refer that question to our national security partners, but our airspace today is capable of managing safe integration of UAS.

Mr. GONZALES. Because this is what I worry about, is after 9/11 everyone is pointing fingers and everyone saw this coming, but it is always somebody else's preview, right. And I am trying to figure out—everyone has a piece of it, and I am trying to figure out what role FAA plays in this when it comes to drone technology, when it comes to drone interaction, when it comes to that piece to it.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. It is a great question, and I should highlight the close coordination, collaboration, and communication between the FAA, the DOT, the Department of Defense, the Department of Homeland Security for the things you are talking about. As we work through integrating UAS into the airspace, we are working alongside our national security partners every day.

Mr. GONZALES. Let me ask you another question. How many drones were in U.S. airspace yesterday?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I will have to take an IOU on that one for you. I know we fly thousands of drones every day in the airspace. I don't have an accurate count for you today.

Mr. GONZALES. We should absolutely know what drones are in our airspace every single day, and that is what I want us to get to. Who is in the air? What are they doing in the air? What are the intentions? And I don't want to wait until it is after the fact. I want to get ahead of that.

To that point, what resources do you need—does FAA need from Congress to ensure that critical infrastructure from future drone threats is safe?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Our budget, in fact, does incorporate our need from Congress, our support from Congress to make sure that as we work through the safe integration into the airspace that we are working specifically on things like drone detection, drone mitigation, again, working with our national security partners who do this for a living.

Mr. GONZALES. I think this is important.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Yes, sir.

Mr. GONZALES. Once again, this isn't the future. We are here, right. And guess what, every drone that is up in the air isn't necessarily going to cause harm, but there may be some that do, and we are at a point where very soon, you know, Amazon packages are going to be delivered, it is going to be a very busy airspace. It already is. And the fact—we need to know how many drones are in the air, and we need to know what those drones' intentions are. And we also need to have counter-UAS incentives—our mitigations involved in that, and I think FAA plays a role in that.

I understand. I understand you are working with other partners, but the airspace belongs to you, right, in many cases. So how do we continue to work with that? A big part of that is the budget on that. I would love to continue to work with you and hear back on some of your answers.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I would be happy to do that. We are very much in favor of the drone detection and, of course, the mitigation, when appropriately utilized.

Mr. GONZALES. I have 1 minute left.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Yes, sir.

Mr. GONZALES. My last question is on this: Section 570 of FAA Reauthorization Act directs the Department to partner with National Academies to assess the loss of commercial air service in small communities and identify options for restoring it. And I appreciate the directive, and I think it comes at a critical time for Del Rio. Del Rio is a border community. Del Rio is central to Laughlin Air Force Base as well as the Del Rio Border Patrol sector.

Can you speak to how the Department is—and we are currently without an airline, right. That community has no access to an airline. Can you speak to how the Department is implementing the section 570 study, and whether Del Rio, given its proximity to international trade, military installations, and key trade corridors, will be considered in this assessment.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Yes, sir. And appreciate the question, because having just returned from the general aviation and business aviation community, I understand the importance of small community air service. I know that our team has been working intensely on doing the analysis that you talk about that reauthorization directs us to do. I will circle back with you with the latest on that effort.

Mr. GONZALES. Right. Thank you.

I yield back, Chairman.

Mr. WOMACK. Mr. Gonzales in his previous question asked a good question, so I am going to follow up real quick. Would it even be possible for the FAA to know how many drones were in U.S. airspace in a given period of time?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. In a given day total?

Mr. WOMACK. Based on our current requirements, based on current law, is it even possible?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I don't believe the FAA would know every single drone in the sky today. But we do, in fact, work with legal operators, and we would be able to collect that data. A child with a drone would be more challenging. I just returned from Texas, and watching some of the demonstrations there, utilizing what we call UAS traffic management. It is an incredible system, and it will keep count of the drones you are talking about.

Mr. WOMACK. Well, while it may be impossible to know if a child getting a Christmas present is launching a drone, I think Tony's question is more relative to the nefarious actor out there who wouldn't be adhering to any rules and regulations that we have.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Yes, sir. And that is why I would just highlight our constant effort with our law enforcement assistance program to go after the clueless, the careless, and the criminal to make sure that we are interdicting as quickly as possible to change that behavior.

Mr. WOMACK. Thank you.

Mr. Aguilar.

Mr. AGUILAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Administrator. I wanted to ask, I understand and I know there have been questions about staffing, Administrator. I understand the FAA has continued processing airport applications for Federal grants, but review times have increased as the agency loses staffing expertise at its headquarters and district offices. This

is troublesome for many airports as these airports work to keep their construction projects on schedule, as you understand.

How has DOGE's efforts to downsize the FAA impacted the agency's grant review time and processing to date?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Thank you for the question. I don't believe that any DOGE activities, which have not directly related to any FAA activities, have had any impacts on the grant specifically. When we first came in, there was a backlog, a serious backlog of grant announcements that we had to work through. As I look at my sheet here, we are looking at $1.7 billion here getting out over 465 grants. So, we have got our momentum going back, but with respect to DOGE specifically, I would say there were no impacts.

Mr. AGUILAR. You don't think a loss of head count has had any effort in the timing and the delays of implementing the grants?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I don't believe there was a loss in head count that impacted grants, just to be specific to the question.

Mr. AGUILAR. We could run through the head-count losses that you have had, but you are—so you are saying at the district level or at the HQ level you don't believe any of the loss of head count has had a direct impact on processing and implementing grants?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. No, sir. I think the delay has been related to the backlog and us working through it. I don't believe it had to do with any change in the staffing.

Mr. AGUILAR. How has the downsizing impacted the FAA's ability to approve airport projects in a timely manner?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. The opportunity really is to go from what we will call traditional or paper-based types of processing and using a more streamlined process. One of the things we are looking at specific to airport grants is the use of AI. Much like we do in the safety realm, now we are looking at processing grants and using categorical exclusions, for instance, when we talk about specific projects as it relates to environmental issues.

We are using a number of different tools that we have today that we probably didn't have a year ago in order to expedite that. But again, I go back to it is not about the change in the workforce specifically; it is more along the lines of building out a more efficient process going forward.

Mr. AGUILAR. And we would love to be partners in building an efficient process. I think that is what the chairman and the ranking member have indicated they are focused on, and we want to be willing partners here. I think what is frustrating is when actions happen or grants don't get out and we just see the impacts and the results, not just of safety concerns, but of actual dollars getting out on the streets, back home, closer to our district.

But since you mentioned projects or since we are talking about projects, the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 included provisions to speed up airport infrastructure projects by reducing regulatory overreach and land use approvals. You talked about categorical exemptions and streamlining the process for approving these projects with local user fees. Can you give an update on the FAA's progress in simplifying airport land use approvals and launching fully streamlined passenger facility charge approval process?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Yeah. Again, I appreciate that question simply because of what we described earlier as backlogs. We have looked

at the opportunity, in addition to what reauthorization has directed, for our staff to be able to look for like opportunities, whether it is in the West Coast or the East Coast and be able to streamline that.

Specific to environmental issues, that is obviously a little bit more challenging, but one of the ways we are doing that is, in fact, using the categorical exclusions to expedite the projects out there. Because I understand getting that money out there, particularly in an important building season, is critical to the local communities.

Mr. AGUILAR. When will the locals see that benefit? When will they see the projects, and when will they see the delays cease?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. The delays have begun to decrease significantly, and they will continue to see more money coming out. Again, in the next few weeks we are going to see hundreds of millions of dollars coming out through those grants.

Mr. AGUILAR. I have got a local issue. We will put it into the record for you to get back to us on San Bernardino International Airport is a Federal contract tower, and we have had some language that we secured in the reauth, and we would love your attention to this and your help with this. We will send it to the record as well.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Thank you.

Mr. WOMACK. Thank you.

Mr. Joyce.

Mr. JOYCE. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. ROCHELEAU, thank you for being here today. I would like to follow up on my distinguished colleague, Mr. Aguilar's comments there, and all of us here are among those who travel through DCA on a pretty regular basis, and we wait at DCA with—most of the traveling public does—for reasons unbeknownst to us. But can you share with the committee any specific steps that is being taken to improve the operational performance at DCA, particularly during these peak travel periods?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Yes, sir. There are a handful of ways we have tackled that. First and foremost, after the tragic collision, we cleared that airspace. We made it less complex by removing the helicopter traffic. That really did contribute to the ability for the controllers to manage our traffic in a safer, more efficient manner.

Second, we focused on the controllers themselves. We had an authorized staffing at 28. We are now at 30, and we are going to 31. We have prioritized hiring for DCA traffic specifically and getting people up to speed there.

And then we work with the carriers. At the end of the day, you have to work with the airports and you have to work with the airlines to make sure that as we have traffic surges, that we are able to spread that out throughout the day to make sure there aren't these peaks, which contribute to delays themselves, and add workload to the controllers.

Mr. JOYCE. Having sat on the runway, whether because we missed our slot because we were a little late taking off——

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I apologize for that.

Mr. JOYCE [continuing]. Getting into DCA is an issue as well, I understand.

What aspects of the FAA's 2026 request are directly aimed at addressing those challenges? Are there further measures or plans under consideration to enhance reliability and efficiency with this critical airport while continuing to prioritize the safety?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I would point you directly to the staffing piece. The staffing piece, whether it is at DCA, and we are focused on DCA, obviously, in addition to places like Newark and other locations, that money that we are requesting for staffing is going to make a difference. We are not waiting for that money to come. We are working towards staffing appropriately as we can with the money that we do have.

But I would say that the staffing is a big piece. When we think about introducing new technologies, we are in a good place as it relates specifically to DCA with respect to our fiber and our communications efforts. But, again, I go back to how it integrates within the larger system, within the Potomac TRACON and the Command Center and some of these other locations, it is going to be critical for us to make these investments into the technologies in addition to the controller workforce itself.

Mr. JOYCE. As we discuss this modernization efforts of the national airspace more broadly, it is important to ensure that the smaller airports, like those in Ohio, were not left behind. These airports do not have 24/7 air traffic control staffing and, therefore, rely mostly on automated systems, like the automated weather observing system and the automated surface observing system for weather reporting to ensure that operations can be carried out safely at all hours.

Investing in the infrastructure and technology at these smaller airports is essential to maintain this sufficient and accessible airspace for all Americans. With this in mind, how do you plan to ensure that the smaller airports, those outside of the core 30 largest airports that rely on these automated systems the most, are adequately prioritized with any system with modernization efforts that are moving forward?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. That is a great question, because again, I certainly appreciate, having just come from the industry, the importance of being able to have that connectivity with local regional airports. The technology specifically is part of our ongoing refresh, if you will. And when we think about surface monitoring or airborne monitoring, all of these technologies, they may not have the same thing that, say, a JFK or a Newark would. But we want to make sure the tools are there, whether it is a staff tower or an uncontrolled airport, that they have those technologies in place. And so, part of this effort is to ensure the continuing refresh of the technologies there and the enhancements as they come available.

Mr. JOYCE. So how will your 26 requests ensure all the airports, regardless of size, have access to the needed funding so they are able to operate at full capacity?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Certainly that is part of the ongoing process as we look at rolling out what we have today, and that is separate from what we are talking about with respect to a whole new modern air traffic plan. It goes back to what I mentioned, where we identify these airports through our NPIAS, through our system, through our approach, and make sure that as these refreshes are

necessary that we are devoting the resources that are critical to get them back up to speed.

Mr. JOYCE. I had the opportunity, as I addressed Secretary Duffy a few weeks back, back in 2017, to go with then-Chairman Shuster and Secretary Chao up to Canada to see the system that they have there. And when you go into our towers and you see the paper and the floppy disk and the other thing, that's not the way it should be, and I appreciate the efforts that you are going to take to fix that. I won't bore you with any more NextGen questions.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Thank you, sir.

Mr. JOYCE. Thank you very much, Chairman.

Mr. WOMACK. And, finally, the distinguished vice chair of this subcommittee, Mrs. Bice.

Mrs. BICE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, Administrator, for being with us this morning.

I want to follow up on a comment that you made in response to Mr. Joyce's question, and that was after the DCA accident that you took a good look at all of the incoming traffic paused helicopter traffic in. But subsequent to the accident there was another incursion—or close call, I should say. I am sorry, not an incursion—a close call that happened with two aircraft leaving DCA. Interestingly enough, I was on the tarmac and saw that happen. So my question to you is, do you believe that you are able to effectively communicate with DOD on military traffic coming in and out of the DCA airspace?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I do believe we have a very good communication link with our Department of Defense partners. I would also say they are not flying right now, because we are revisiting the letter of authorization that we have going. Unless it is a mission critical operation——

Mrs. BICE. Who defines mission critical?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. We have protocols set up through this letter of agreement that a national security mission, a law enforcement intervention, something along those lines, a medevac-type thing, those would be coordinated with the controllers and there are certain codes they use to talk back and forth.

But in terms of what we will call priority transport or some of the other more routine activities that the Army was conducting, we have shut those down until such time as we are comfortable with what we will call new rules of the road.

Mrs. BICE. And you do believe that the airspace in DCA is safe?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Absolutely.

Mrs. BICE. Okay. Earlier we talked about the Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center. When I was elected in 2020, that was actually in my congressional district. It is now not after redistricting, but I am very conscientious of what happens at that facility. One of the things that surprised me is the length of time it takes to actually get an air traffic controller into a tower. They apply. They have to have an initial screening. Then they have to do testing. Then there is a medical evaluation. This process takes some time.

And the one thing that surprised me the most is how long the medical eval can take. Can you talk a little bit about what you are doing to address that specifically?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Yes. Thank you. It did take too long, and that is one of the reasons why the Secretary has tasked us with supercharging this hiring process, cutting 5 months out of the process in general.

Specific to medicals though, one of the ways we truncated that process was by looking at security and medicals in tandem to make sure we process them efficiently, effectively, and not waiting in line. We are doing it concurrently. That made a big difference in reducing that timeline.

Also, the medical certification piece of this, whether it is for the controllers or the pilots that we talk about, I meet with the airspace surgeon on a regular basis to track that. We have just recently provided some additional information for people to, essentially, educate themselves to bring the proper paperwork. It is over 90 percent of the people that come in, and they get that medical certificate when they walk out. That is a real tribute to, again, the Secretary and the team that has put an emphasis on this.

Mrs. BICE. Let's talk about air traffic controllers for a moment. Certainly, you have talked about an increase in hiring, which we all agree is necessary. There are people that are, you know, maybe, you know, want to leave the profession because they have been in it for many, many years, and it is a high-stress position, a lot of expectation. It is a zero-failure mission.

Can you talk a little bit about the overtime that has been potentially placed on air traffic controllers, particularly at larger airports due to maybe shortages and how that is impacting their ability to, you know—maybe longevity in that role?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I work very closely with the controller union president. We have a number of engagements to basically keep a finger on the pulse of the health and the welfare of the controllers. There are indeed facilities that require overtime simply because of staffing and we make sure that we do that. At the same time, we have a number of safety reporting systems in place that if someone is feeling that stress or someone needs that time off, we allow that person to take that time. So, we are very focused on the safety, the health, and the welfare of the controllers themselves.

As it relates to additional staffing, that is part of what we are going through here with hiring new controllers, and in those facilities that are most critically understaffed prioritizing them for controllers that can come in and hit the ground running.

Mrs. BICE. Thank you for that.

My time is almost up, but I just want to offer you the opportunity, when you have time, to come to Oklahoma City, visit the Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center. I am sure that the full committee chairman, Mr. Cole, and I, along with Congressman Lucas, would love the opportunity to just visit with you and see what we can do to continue to strengthen the facility. It is a large facility. It has a lot of, I think, infrastructure needs that we need to invest in. And so, certainly, we are here to help you make sure that the facility meets the needs of the next century.

So with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield.

Mr. WOMACK. I thank the gentlelady.

As I recognize the final member of our panel here this morning, the chair notices a young man in the audience with a similar tie to Mr. Ciscomani.

Mr. Ciscomani, do you have a guest here?

Mr. CISCOMANI. I do, my son, Kenny. He is here joining us. I already told press that he's not available for questions just yet, but he will be at some point.

Mr. WOMACK. You are recognized.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Administrator Rocheleau, for being with us today. I first want to ask about an issue that is top of mind for many airports around the country, including Tucson International Airport in southern Arizona, and that is regarding PFAS remediation. In my district, the presence of PFAS is a major public health threat. The FAA has previously mandated the use of PFAS containing foams for commercial airports. And while many airports like Tucson International Airport are now transitioning to foams that do not contain PFAS, they are still burdened with the cost of remediation for previously used foams. How does your agency plan to assist commercial airports in these critical remediation efforts?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Thank you for the question. Tucson has a special place in my heart. It was my first assignment as a second lieutenant in the Air Force, and so I am familiar with the airport and the importance of it.

With respect to PFAS and the mitigations there, I connected with my Airports office yesterday, and I understand we have ongoing dialogue with how we are going to manage through that. I know that there was an authorization to further mitigate PFAS that we are talking about, not just in Tucson but in other locations. An appropriation will be particularly critical to being able to move forward on some of those mitigations.

At Tucson, and a few other airports, the plan to mitigate that is ongoing with respect to ensuring that the airports have the information they need to follow that up when the funding appears.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Yeah. And I think that is critical, so I will certainly advocate for you all to receive the funds that are needed to clean up PFAS in our community without creating the undue burden on the airports themselves that already have limited budgets, as you know. So I appreciated your attention on this critical issue.

Next, I would like to highlight a key facility in my district, Pinal Airpark. If you have been in southern Arizona, you probably are familiar with Pinal Airpark. This general aviation and military facility, originally known as Marana Army Airfield, is notably where more than 10,000 pilots trained during World War II. Today the airpark supports a mix of military and commercial aviation activities with over 100,000 flight operations annually. Pinal Airpark is among the busiest multiuse airports in the Nation operating without an air traffic control tower.

Last year, Congress passed the FAA reauthorization bill with the provision prioritizing the construction of air traffic control towers that support safety at multiuse airports. Pinal Airpark fits this description perfectly and was recently accepted as a candidate for the FAA contract tower program. Can I have your agency's commit-

ment to fully considered Pinal Airpark as a candidate for a new tower under this program?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Yes, you can.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Perfect. Thank you. That is critical here for us. On the air traffic control tower at Pinal Airpark is greatly needed, and I look forward to working with you to make that tower a reality.

Here with the last minute or so that I have, I want to ask about something that you touched on in your testimony and some of my colleagues have mentioned as well is the air traffic control tower staffing side of it as well. What specific steps is the FAA taking to ensure adequate staffing levels at critical facilities across the country on that matter?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Again, I can't emphasize enough the importance of making sure that under the Secretary's leadership, that we do, in fact, realize the supercharge goal that we are attempting. Right now, we are focused on making sure that we get up to 2,500 through Oklahoma City, as well as through our enhanced CTI training schools and the collegiate partnerships that we have. In addition to that, we are incentivizing people to come to the FAA and go to tougher to staff locations with financial incentives.

I think one of the things that is really going to help us in this effort, though, and it is critical, is we are giving 20 percent more per year to experienced controllers to stay on as certified controllers, whether that is in an operational role or is in a training role, and make sure that we have that bridge to get healthy again in our controller staff. We are 3,000 down, and we are working to make sure that within the next couple years that we have got that back healthy.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Real quick here, what do you think the shortage—what is the reason for it? I mean, it pays well, you know, high training. Now you have incentives to stay. Just real quick, what do you think highlights of the shortage is?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I think there were a variety of reasons. Part of it is advertising. We are trying to make sure people understand, this is an exciting, very rewarding career field. I also think that the time to get people into the Academy was too long. We were at a year and a half in some cases, and a 25-year-old is not going to wait around for a year and a half to get a job. They are going to go do something. Truncating the process and getting them into the school quicker, is going to help us.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Thank you, sir. We would love to welcome you back to your old stomping grounds——

Mr. ROCHELEAU. All right.

Mr. CISCOMANI [continuing]. In Tucson and have you there soon. Thank you so much.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Thank you.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. WOMACK. Thank you, Mr. Ciscomani.

If it pleases the subcommittee, we are going to do one more round of just a single question, so be thinking about your question.

But before I go to my last question, I am going to recognize the overall chairman of the committee once again, Mr. Cole, who has been gracious enough to sit through this entire hearing today.

Mr. Cole, I am going to recognize you for any final comments you would like to make, because I know you have an agenda and you have got to escape.

Mr. COLE. I do. Thank you.

I just want to compliment you, Mr. Chairman, you, Mr. Ranking Member, and every member of this committee.

And I particularly want to single out you, Mr. Administrator.

This is the way a hearing ought to work. This is a really good hearing. All the questions were substantive. All of them focused on real needs. All of you had real concerns. You put them out there. I want to compliment the leadership of this committee on both sides of the aisle for the manner in which this was done.

And I want to compliment you, Mr. Administrator. You are a terrific witness. You know your stuff. And you have been very candid and forthcoming with the committee and very helpful in us understanding.

And I am serious, I do think this is one of the areas we can and should cooperate on. I don't see much in the way of partisanship that deals with this or even profound disagreement. We mostly agree on what needs to get done here. And again, I want to thank the members of the committee, because everybody came here with a legitimate concern and very legitimate questions. And I didn't think, with all due respect, anybody was looking for a television moment. They just wanted to know the stuff and figure out what they could do to help you and the mission you have in keeping our skies, in particular, safe.

A lot more committee meetings are like this than we get credit for in the media. And I want to thank all of you, again, on each side of the aisle and our witness for making it a really excellent and useful committee hearing. So thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Ranking Member. I appreciate it.

Mr. WOMACK. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Cole. And you have honored us with your presence here today, and we truly appreciate it.

My final question goes back to staffing. You have a lot of things that you are responsible for, and it is good that on the mission-critical safety required things, that people have been excluded from the DRP and efforts to downsize. But the fact is, you do so many other things that are not directly related to aviation safety. And I am talking about certifications and lots of other different programs, reevaluation of airspace as an example and things like rulemaking beyond the visual line of sight.

Can you confirm that our staffing reductions are not going to interfere with your ability to conduct some of these other lesser-known functions of the FAA?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Yes, sir, I can. Again, safety critical, we will always continue, where we find need, to bring people back. The Secretary has been very clear with me, if I have a need for something, whether it is aeronautical services or an engineer—and by the way, we continue to hire engineers to do our oversight—I have that ability to do that. We will be solid on staffing.

Mr. WOMACK. Thank you.

Mr. Clyburn.

Mr. CLYBURN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I do have a question.

Mr. Administrator, you have had a long career in the United States Air Force. Do you know—this is more rhetorical. If you don't know, I won't be insulted—the name of Daniel "Chappie" James?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Yes, sir, I do.

Mr. CLYBURN. Thank you very much. Do you remember who he was?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Yes, sir, I do.

Mr. CLYBURN. Well, Daniel—I knew Daniel "Chappie" James. When you have been around as long as I have, you would know these people. He was a good buddy. He became the first African American in this country to be a four-star general. He got that generalship because of a DEI program that was put in place that became known as the Tuskegee Airmen.

Now, there seems to be some preoccupation with DEI on this subcommittee, so I am not going to be able to sleep with myself if I don't raise this issue. Now, in his first administration, President Trump put in place a DEI program for people with disabilities and it was successful. Now, in this administration, he has gotten rid of that program. Are you familiar with that program that brought people with disabilities into the FAA?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I am generally familiar with it.

Mr. CLYBURN. It was a very successful program, but we have gotten rid of that program now because of this notion of DEI. Mr. Chairman, I know that every time—this comes up in these subcommittees, but every time it comes up, I am going to always rebut with facts. Chappie James is one of the most successful air fighter pilots, not a Red Tail because he became a real fighter pilot, and he helped us to win that war. And I yield back.

Mr. WOMACK. Mr. Ciscomani.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And one of the things that I talked to Secretary Duffy about as well, Administrator Duffy, was about a midair crash that happened on February 19 in Miranda, Arizona. Two people died in that terrible accident. You know, Mr. Duffy called it tragic. I agree. I know there is a report being compiled on that with more details on it. I know that we briefly talked about some of the potential reasons for that incident, but I am just, you know, just to comment more than anything that I am looking forward to receiving the report here from the FAA hopefully soon.

Do you have any idea of a timeline that we could potentially be looking at? Are you familiar with the incident or——

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I am familiar——

Mr. CISCOMANI. Yeah.

Mr. ROCHELEAU [continuing]. With the incident. It was indeed a tragedy. I am not familiar with the status of the report. I will certainly take that as an IOU and get back to you. It is one of those things where I continue to encourage, coming from business general aviation, there is some very important equipment that I think people have an opportunity to equip their aircraft with that can increase safety in those circumstances. I understand it was an uncontrolled airfield at the time.

Mr. CISCOMANI. It was, yeah, uh-huh.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. But I commit to you to getting you the update on that report.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Excellent. Thank you, sir.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Yes.

Mr. WOMACK. Mr. Quigley.

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Chairman, I will abide by your one question. This will be a five-point question——

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Okay.

Mr. QUIGLEY [continuing]. If that is all right. I am just kidding. There is a bipartisan Quiet Skies Caucus, and on a bipartisan basis got provisions into the last reauthorization, including creation of an aviation noise officer, regional noise officers, and then a requirement that you review and revise the FAA noise standards. Where are we at with that, and will the budgetary issues affect that as well?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I am aware of it. I understand that we regularly engage in Quiet Skies Caucus efforts, not to mention community engagement. I can't tell you today—again, I will commit to getting back to you—where we are specifically. But I can tell you that the budget that we are requesting goes directly to supporting those activities.

Mr. QUIGLEY. And I would appreciate—we don't have the time today, but I would appreciate you or your staff, they can engage with myself or my staff, to talk about this further, and perhaps have an ongoing discussion with that bipartisan Quiet Skies Caucus. Thank you.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Yes, sir.

Mr. WOMACK. Mr. Strong.

Mr. STRONG. Mr. Administrator, I know that you mentioned earlier that 35—you had a 35 percent failure rate in the training of air traffic controllers. I encourage you to maintain the highest of standards, never lower those standards. It was interesting for you to mention that.

In 2021, Huntsville International Airport was selected as one of the five locations of UAS detection and mitigation testing. Section 383 of the 2018 FAA Reauthorization Act directed the FAA to test and evaluate technologies and systems that can detect and mitigate potential safety risk posed by UAS at and near airports. Mr. Administrator, what is the status of that testing, and what feedback have you received from DHS, DOJ, or other law enforcement partners?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Thank you for the question. Yes, in fact, the testing at Huntsville was very valuable. In fact, my understanding from my team is that 48 different UAS were tested, and 30 different types of detection equipment were tested at five different airports, most recently up in New Jersey, but Huntsville was a particularly important part of that effort. What we learned from that effort was that the detection capabilities are there today, and whether it is airports or law enforcement, and certainly DOD and DHS, we are working closely with them to make sure that those detection equipment capabilities are there for the right people.

In addition to that, since we are responsible for the safety of operating in the skies, we want to make sure that those mitigation efforts are carefully put in place, because mitigation can, in fact,

affect civil aviation traffic. And so, that is part of that effort that we are going through, both on the detection side, critically important, and then we partner with the appropriate law enforcement security agencies to do the mitigation piece.

Mr. STRONG. Thank you, Mr. Rocheleau.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. WOMACK. Thank you.

Bring us home, Mrs. Torres.

Mrs. TORRES. Thank you, Chairman.

And there is two things that I want to ask of you, but I am going to put them in writing to you. I just want to let you know about them today, because they are critically important for some of my constituents. One is an update on where the six studies stand, included in the 2024 FAA reauthorization studies on cabin air quality, temperature, radiation, and modern evacuation training; and the other is on the PAPI system. You know it as the Position Approach Path Indicator. It is a bipartisan supported program that requires substantial updates. It saves a lot of money on energy by replacing the bulbs. Can you give us an update on the progress of this program for the runways that still need to be updated?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I am familiar with the PAPI program. I do commit to getting you the status on both of those issues.

Mrs. TORRES. Thank you, and I yield back.

Mr. WOMACK. And just in time, Pete, welcome back. You have got just a few seconds to ask your last question.

Mr. AGUILAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You told me it was the best for last. You are not saying that in public anymore, but that is fine.

Mr. WOMACK. Well, I kind of inferred that with Mrs. Torres, but you made it back.

Mr. AGUILAR. I wanted to build—thank you, Mr. Chairman. Appreciate your indulgence.

Mr. Administrator, I wanted to build off of what Ranking Member Clyburn discussed, and one of the programs that exists within your agency and within DOT broadly is the DBE program, the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program. The FAA Reauthorization Act included a bill that was mine that was specific for DBE supportive services expansion. It created DBE supportive services program at the FAA. I appreciate that the FAA budget justification highlights that the FAA is prioritizing implementing DBE programs in fiscal year 2026.

However, the budget justification did not request funding for DBE programs. Just as a refresh here, these are small, for-profit businesses and at least 51 percent owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals: women, minorities, other socially and economically disadvantaged groups. Oftentimes, our Federal programs reward prime contractors and very big folks who have more compliance people than they know what to do with. And making sure that smaller businesses have an opportunity to bid on contracts and to procure is an incredibly important part of what we do. How does the FAA plan to implement the DBE program in this new supportive services program without requesting any funding?

Mr. ROCHELEAU. I understand the importance of this. As you mentioned, there are certainly those vendors out there that have subs, and that is how they conduct this. I know that both our disadvantaged business office as well as our Airports office work together in executing these plans, working with airports, working with associations that support these as well.

With respect to what we are doing as it relates to today's activities, I will take the IOU to get back to you and come in and give a briefing to you and your staff. I know we have a subject matter expert on that topic itself, and I am happy to get him engaged.

Mr. AGUILAR. Specifically related to the funding, this is the Appropriations Committee.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Yeah.

Mr. AGUILAR. And the funding and the resources that you decide to use as you implement this program, I would be interested in seeing it. If you want to work with our office, I would definitely take you up on that. Thank you.

Mr. ROCHELEAU. Very good. Thank you.

Mr. WOMACK. Thank you.

Mr. Administrator, thank you so much for being here today.

I want to echo the sentiments that Mr. Cole made earlier about the quality of the hearing, and certainly, the quality of the witness, but I am also mindful of the fact that you have a good staff of great people behind you. And Kate and Julie and Hannah, and others across that spectrum, do yeoman's work and are dedicated to the service of the general public and the taxpaying public.

And so to the staff, I want to thank you for the work that you do as well.

I want to remind our members that you have 7 days to submit any questions that you would like submitted to the record with our subcommittee staff.

Again, I want to thank everybody for being here today.

Mr. Clyburn, as always, good to share the dais with you, and I hope it is a good week for you.

Mr. CLYBURN. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for what I consider to be a very substantive hearing. I do and will always reiterate that we aren't asking—I have never asked—for any standards to be lowered. I only ask for what I call fair—not preferential but fair—treatment. And so as a member of this committee, I am going to always insist upon the record carrying that notion.

Mr. Chairman, when I was studying in college, I studied a man named Alexis de Tocqueville. I am sure you are familiar with Mr. Tocqueville.

Mr. WOMACK. Very familiar. French nobleman, yes.

Mr. CLYBURN. Absolutely. He wrote a two-volume work called "Democracy in America." And de Tocqueville wrote in that book that America's greatness is not that it is more enlightened than any other nation, but rather because she has always been able to repair her faults. That is what makes this country great. We find a fault and we repair it. That is how Daniel "Chappie" James, Jr., became great, repairing a fault. Thank you, and I yield back.

Mr. WOMACK. And on that note, this subcommittee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:58 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

Chris Rocheleau, Acting Administrator
Budget Hearing – Federal Aviation Administration
Rep. Pete Aguilar
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations

Procuring Radar Display System in Federal Contract Towers

Last year, I helped secure language in the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 to require the FAA to allow STARS radar display systems to be available in federal contract towers, including at the San Bernardino International Airport (SBD) in my district.

However, the FAA has still not allowed SBD to procure a radar display system for its tower and instead, the FAA has narrowly focused on developing a new, ground-up Airborne Position Reference Tool (APRT) that has yet to be reviewed and officially approved by the FAA.

While I appreciate that the President's Budget Request includes $450 million for the Radar Replacement Program to replace existing radar display systems, the prevention of installing a radar display system at SBD and other sponsor-owned federal contract towers (FCTs) throughout the country is a critical safety issue.

> **Question A1:** Acting Administrator, can you provide a timeline of when the FAA will implement this section of the FAA Reauthorization Act and allow the installation of radar display systems in sponsor-owned federal contract towers?
>
> **Answer:** The FAA fully recognizes the importance of situational awareness tools at federal contract towers, particularly at high-activity facilities like San Bernardino International Airport (SBD). The STARS program is currently in sustainment and does not have the infrastructure to expand access to unfiltered FAA surveillance data for consumption by additional non-FAA systems and services. Therefore, the FAA has outlined minimum requirements and conducted safety assessments to support the integration of an equivalent system called Airborne Position Reference Tools (APRT) to improve operational situational awareness in towers without STARS. Four manufacturers have submitted applications for APRT to the Non-federal Contract Tower Program, and their proposals are now under evaluation, with multiple systems expected to be approved later this year. These systems will be procured, owned, and operated by airport sponsors, in alignment with the framework set forth in section 620 of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024. San Bernardino International Airport is a proposed test site for one of the vendors.

Additionally, the new Airborne Position Reference Tool would only use Automatic Dependent Surveillance - Broadcast, or ADS-B technology, which uses an aircraft's position, electronic systems in an aircraft and ground infrastructure to determine an aircraft's location in the airspace. According to SBD, federal contract towers with only ADS-B information cannot see at least 30 to 50 percent of the airplanes flying overhead in my district.

Prohibiting radar data at sponsor-owned FCTs is a fundamental flaw for the entire National Airspace System (NAS) and I hope to work with the FAA to address this critical safety issue at SBD and other contract towers.

Question A2: Can the FAA commit to allowing federal contract towers, including sponsor- owned FCTs, to buy tower work stations with FAA radar data in addition to ADS-B data?

Answer: The FAA understands the concerns raised regarding surveillance coverage at certain federal contract towers, including at sponsor-owned facilities like SBD. Currently, the agency does not have an appropriate infrastructure to expand access to unfiltered FAA surveillance data for consumption by non-FAA systems and services. This surveillance information contains Sensitive Flight Data (SFD), a type of sensitive unclassified information requiring heightened security and access controls. Ensuring the SFD is appropriately controlled and protected requires a significant investment for the assessment and oversight of cyber, physical, and personnel security. As part of implementing section 620 of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, the FAA is reviewing four industry-proposed solutions that will provide situational awareness for towers without STARS, all of which are based on ADS-B technology. These solutions are being assessed against defined criteria to ensure they provide sufficient coverage and performance.

Staffing at FAA's Office of Airports

As you know, the FAA Office of Airports provides critical safety and regulatory oversight and support to our Nation's airports. It also administers the critical and bipartisan-supported Airport Improvement Program (AIP), Passenger Facility Charge (PFC) program, as well as other important grant programs that help ensure U.S. airports operate safely, efficiently and effectively.

Currently, Office of Airports staff also must review and approve a variety of documents submitted by airports to enable their capital projects and verify compliance with FAA certification requirements. Loss of staff that perform these essential functions has the potential to lead to significant delays in airport capital projects and degradation of the National Airspace System.

Question A3: Can you provide details of the magnitude of staff reductions within the Office of Airports over the last six months? Specifically, can you share comparisons of staffing levels within the FAA Office of Airports at FAA Headquarters, at individual FAA Regional Offices and at individual FAA Airports District Offices between December 2024 and June 2025?

Answer: The FAA's top priority is safety. We continue to closely monitor onboard staffing levels, in light of recently offered early retirement and resignation incentives, to ensure all safety critical and other Federally funded projects are adequately staffed. We are leveraging staff by having the regional and district offices support headquarters and having regions support each other. We will continue to be flexible to ensure we meet all of the safety goals and implementation of all programs managed by the Office of Airports.

Question A4: Can you share how the U.S. Department of Transportation and the FAA will

ensure effective administration of its statutory responsibilities for airport certification and development despite Office of Airports staff reductions?

Answer: The Office of Airports continues to ensure that Airport Certification Safety Inspectors (ACSIs) responsible for airport safety compliance at our Part 139 airports are properly trained, and we continue to hire ACSIs and airport engineers. We are also looking at efficiencies within our offices and cross-utilization of positions to ensure that we continue to execute our statutory mission effectively.

Chris Rocheleau, Acting Administrator
Budget Hearing – Federal Aviation Administration
[Congresswoman Stephanie Bice]
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations

FAA Air Traffic Control Overhaul

Question Background:

On June 3, 2025, the Department of Transportation announced they issued a Request for Information in the lead up to building a new air traffic control system.

Questions:

Question B1: Acting Administrator Rocheleau, will you commit to ensuring the next air traffic control system includes capabilities to track drones flying through airspace?

a. What upgradeability do you expect this system to have to keep up with automation and other advances in aviation?

Answer: Yes, the FAA is committed to ensuring that the brand-new air traffic control system includes capabilities to track drones operating in the National Airspace System. As part of the modernization effort announced in the June 2025 Request for Information, the FAA is prioritizing a flexible and modular system architecture designed to accommodate emerging technologies, including unmanned aircraft systems. This future system will build on ongoing investments in drone integration, such as Remote ID, UAS Traffic Management (UTM), and Low Altitude Authorization and Notification Capability (LAANC), and will be upgradable to keep pace with advancements in automation and surveillance. Ensuring situational awareness for all airspace users, including drones, is a key objective as we reimagine the NAS to meet evolving operational demands safely and efficiently.

Question B2: How long do you expect the process to take from the RFI to completing the installation of the first upgraded system in a tower?

Answer: Following the June 3, 2025, Request for Information, the FAA plans a phased, multi-year rollout of the new air traffic control system. During this initial stage, the FAA is conducting Industry Days, reviewing proposals, and selecting a systems integrator to lead the effort to build a brand-new air traffic system. Upon selecting an integrator, we will work with them to create a master schedule.

Question B3: Has the FAA considered including AI predictive modeling in the next air traffic control system to assist air traffic controllers in advance of near misses?

Answer: Yes, the FAA is actively exploring the use of artificial intelligence and predictive analytics as part of the future brand-new air traffic control system. As we evolve the NAS, one key focus is leveraging data-driven tools that can assist air traffic controllers by identifying potential conflicts earlier and enhancing overall situational awareness. Predictive modeling, including AI-based technologies, has the potential to support safety by analyzing traffic patterns, identifying anomalies, and providing decision support to help prevent incidents such as near misses. These

capabilities are being evaluated alongside broader system upgrades to ensure they can be safely and effectively integrated into controller workflows.

Chris Rocheleau, Acting Administrator
Budget Hearing – Federal Aviation Administration
[Congressman Tom Cole]
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations

Question Background:

The University of Oklahoma is a member of ASSURE (pronounced "assure"), the FAA's Center of Excellence for unmanned aircraft systems (UAS). OU is also home to the Advanced Radar Research Center which is developing and adapting radar technologies for UAS operations and detection.

Question:

- **C1** Can you speak to the importance of detecting, tracking, and identifying non-cooperative drones as well as the work of OU in developing radar capabilities for small UAS?

Answer:

Detecting, tracking, and identifying non-cooperative drones is crucial for the FAA's safety and security missions. Non-cooperative drones can pose significant threats, especially in sensitive areas around airports, radar facilities, and other critical infrastructure. Drones operating in or near controlled airspace pose collision risks to manned aviation and other aircraft. The FAA's ability to detect, track and identify non-cooperative drones is important to maintaining safety and security in the National Airspace System while ensuring the safe integration of drones.

The FAA has made significant investments in evaluating Detect, Track, and Identify (DTI) technologies for dealing with non-cooperative drones in programs such as our on-airport testing program authorized under Section 383 of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018. More recently, the FAA has partnered with the ASSURE Center of Excellence on the Evaluation of UAS Integration Safety and Security Technologies in the NAS project which demonstrates, tests, and validates the efficacy and safety of detection technologies in off-airport environments.

The project has successfully completed three testing events – one in Alaska in 2023, one in Cape May, New Jersey in April 2025, and most recently in Santa Teresa, New Mexico in June 2025. The two final test events for this project are planned to take place in North Dakota and Mississippi in the coming months. These evaluations help determine the effectiveness of detection technologies and assess whether they interfere with FAA systems or aircraft navigation. With the University of Oklahoma's recent addition to the ASSURE consortium of universities in the first quarter of calendar year 2025, we are excited to see them bring their capabilities and expertise, especially in the area of radar detection, to ASSURE's research efforts for UAS detection for low altitude air domain awareness.

- **C2** In 2016, Congress required the FAA to establish rules for protecting critical infrastructure from drones. Can you tell us where the FAA is in that rulemaking?

Answer:

On May 13, 2025, the rule "Designation – Restrict the Operation of an Unmanned Aircraft in Close Proximity to a Fixed Site Facility" (RIN 2120-AL33) was accepted by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for interagency review pursuant to Executive Order 12866. The FAA is coordinating with interagency partners to implement E.O. 14305, Restoring American Airspace Sovereignty, issued on June 6, 2025, with consideration of all sectors identified in National Security Memorandum 22 of April 30, 2024 (Critical Infrastructure Security and Resilience) (NSM–22). The FAA looks forward to publishing this proposed rule for public comment upon conclusion of that coordination and following OMB approval.

Chris Rocheleau, Acting Administrator
Budget Hearing – Federal Aviation Administration
[Mike Quigley]
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations

Question Subject Area

Question Background:

Some manufacturers in Europe have been pushing safety regulators to approve a regulatory pathway for Single Pilot Operations, also sometimes referred to as Reduced Crew Operations, which would remove a pilot from the flight deck during cruise portions of long-haul commercial flights. It is our understanding that this runs counter to current FAA regulations and long held aviation safety policy, which require two pilots to share the workload, check each other's actions, and provide important redundancy in the event of an in-flight emergency or pilot incapacitation.

Question Q1:
Is the FAA concerned that Single Pilot Operations would negatively affect aviation safety, and does it oppose efforts to remove pilots from the flight deck on commercial flights?

Answer:
The FAA is not currently reviewing the safety effects of reduced or single-pilot crew operations for transport category airplanes or pursuing changes to the two-pilot crew operational standards. Our priority remains maintaining the highest safety standards and the FAA will not do anything to compromise safety or the public's trust. Any future decisions to modify FAA's regulations, including the regulations in part 117 (relating to pilot fatigue) and part 121 (operation of regularly scheduled air carriers), would be based on careful analysis of the data.

Question Subject Area

Question Background:

According to the FAA, in recent years scheduled public charter flights operating under Part 380 have expanded in frequency and complexity with the rapid growth posing an increased risk to safety of the flying public. Subsequently, the FAA issued a Notice of Intent (NOI) to consider revising rules that have enabled the proliferation of scheduled passenger airline operations that circumvent the Part 121 safety requirements.

Question: Q2

What steps are the FAA taking to address the issues raised in the NOI?

Answer:
In August 2023, a notice of intent (NOI) was published to gather public input regarding a potential rule change to decouple certain FAA operational safety requirements from the provisions of part 380 governing "public charters," which are administered by DOT as a form of economic regulation. This prospective rulemaking would have amended a definitional section of the Federal Aviation Regulations in part 110. The NOI was preceded by several letters from industry associations expressing concern about the potential changes, which according to many industry stakeholders' interpretations would have required that scheduled air service must occur under part 135 on-demand regulations. The NOI received 59,921 comments, most of those from public charter customers opposed to the FAA taking away the service their preferred operators provide. There were 88 comments from organizations; 30 from organizations that agreed with the FAA proposal to move forward, 54 that opposed, and 4 with a neutral stance. The remaining comments were submitted by individual commentors and were substantially similar in wording and intent.

The FAA is evaluating the aforementioned comments received from the public. Further action, which may include advancement, revision, or retraction of this initiative, is being deliberated in accordance with Executive Order 14192, "Unleashing Prosperity Through Deregulation" (Jan. 31, 2025).

Chris Rocheleau, Acting Administrator
Budget Hearing – Federal Aviation Administration
[Rep. Womack]
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations

Question Background:

XNA is one of very few airports in Class C airspace with a federal contract control tower. Commercial operations at XNA are as high or higher than neighboring commercial airports and are the most of any contract tower within the continental US.
The airport has reported that current equipment and staffing levels are an issue and are not at a level that would be consistent with a comparable airport whose tower is owned and operated by the FAA.

In April, FAA personnel spoke with the Airport Director and discussed potential timing of equipment installation as part of the development of a new tower, with potential installation occurring as early as this summer (2025). Additionally, FAA reported that management of the contract tower was recently transitioned to CI2 Aviation, and that FAA will work with the vendor to ensure appropriate staffing and equipage is maintained.

Questions:

Administrator Rocheleau, I am a strong supporter of the FAA Contract Tower Program, which enhances aviation safety at smaller airports around the country, including at four airports in my district. Contract towers play a critical role in our National Airspace System, providing air traffic services at airports that would otherwise lack such service.

A few years ago, the FAA moved the administration of the FAA Contract Tower Program to the Program Management Organization from Air Traffic Services.

- **W1:** Has the agency realized any of the improvements from that shift?

Answer: The transition of the FAA Contract Tower Program to the Program Management Organization allowed for more focused oversight, improved program coordination, and enhanced support for infrastructure planning and execution. This shift strengthened collaboration with vendors, facilitated better resource allocation, and enabled a more strategic approach to addressing equipment and staffing needs at contract towers across the country.

- **W2:** As you work to modernize the ATC system, I have some concern that contract towers will be an afterthought if they no longer reside in the services division. Will you re-examine the management of the program in the context of broader changes?

Answer: The FAA remains committed to ensuring that contract towers are fully integrated into our broader modernization efforts. While we are not currently considering changes to the

program's management structure, the Program Management Organization works closely with Air Traffic Services and other stakeholders to ensure contract towers are not only included, but also prioritized appropriately, within system-wide initiatives.

Northwest Arkansas National Airport (XNA) is one such airport in the contract tower program, despite operating in controlled airspace and handling a volume of commercial airline traffic comparable to or exceeding many FAA-operated facilities. In fact, it has the highest number of air carrier operations of any contract tower.

Operations at the airport occur almost exclusively under instrument flight rules, meanwhile the equipment and staffing levels at XNA do not match what would typically be found in a comparable FAA-operated tower. This discrepancy appears to stem from XNA's unusual position as one of only two Class C airports with a contract tower.

The airport is currently going through a terminal modernization project which includes the construction of a new tower.

- **W3:** Will you commit to helping properly equip the new tower to ensure it is on par from a capability perspective with similar airports?

Answer: The FAA recognizes the role that XNA plays in the National Airspace System and are committed to supporting efforts that ensure safe and efficient operations there. As the new tower project moves forward, the FAA will continue working closely with the airport and the contract tower vendor to assess equipment needs and ensure the facility is aligned, to the extent possible, with the capabilities of comparable FAA-operated towers.

- **W4:** I'd also like to request that you meet with XNA officials to evaluate their staffing needs and establish an ongoing partnership to ensure the tower's resources keep pace with the airport's growth and operational demands. Can we arrange that?

Answer: The FAA can certainly facilitate a meeting between XNA officials and the appropriate leadership within the Air Traffic Organization. Continued engagement is important, and we welcome the opportunity to better understand the airport's operational needs and ensure ongoing coordination as the facility and its services evolve.

Chris Rocheleau, Acting Administrator
Budget Hearing – Federal Aviation Administration
Rep. Ryan Zinke (MT-01)
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations

Deadline for Submission: Wednesday, June 11, 2025, at 5 PM EST

FAA Regional Office Staffing

Background:
Currently, the Helena Airport District Office (ADO), which serves my district, has 9 staff members. Prior to staffing reduction efforts, the Helena ADO was staffed at 15. It appears likely the office will not be able to sustain the level of services provided to Montana's airports.

Question Z1:
What steps will Congress take to ensure that FAA Airport District Offices are adequately staffed to maintain safety oversight, manage critical infrastructure projects, and support airport operations, given the proposed personnel reductions in the FY 2026 budget?

Answer: The FAA has not proposed any personnel reductions for the Office of Airports in the FY 2026 budget. We will continue to monitor onboard staffing levels closely, in light of recently offered early retirement and resignation incentives, to ensure all safety-critical and other federally funded projects are adequately staffed.

Protecting Aircraft Owners Private Information

Background:
As required by the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 (Public Law 118-63), the FAA implemented Section 803 Data Privacy, that allows private aircraft owners to request to keep certain ownership information, like their name and address, private and not publicly available on FAA websites. This will have a negative impact to a variety of aviation activities including state aircraft registration fee collections, airport fee collections, FBO fee collections, and aircraft emergency search operations.

At the end of May, the FAA removed access to the online FAA Aircraft Registration Database. Removing this access was not identified in the FAA's Request for Comment to Withhold Certain Aircraft Registration Information from Public Dissemination-Docket No. FAA-2025-0638 or any notice to identify this action.

The State of Montana utilizes this information multiple times per week to conduct state required aircraft registrations, and other state related business. The Montana Department of Transportation Aeronautics Division receives 68% of its revenue from the collection of

registration fees. The Aeronautics Division has reached out to the FAA to clarify intent and inquire about future access, but they have not received a response.

Question Z2:
Given that Section 803 of the 2024 FAA Reauthorization Act restricts access to aircraft ownership information, what legislative or regulatory remedies will Congress pursue to balance privacy concerns with the operational and financial needs of state aviation agencies, airports, and FBOs that rely on this data to assess and collect lawful fees?

Answer: As noted, the FAA implemented the congressionally directed statutory requirement in section 803 of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024. The FAA is developing a process to share data covered by section 803 with external stakeholders who have a bona fide business need for such information.

ATC Tower Staffing

Background:
The lack of staffing at contracted air traffic control facilities is cause for safety concerns.

Question Z3:
What actions will Congress take to ensure consistent staffing and funding for the FAA Contract Tower Program so that air traffic control services at smaller but essential airports are not compromised by contractor workforce shortages?

Answer: The FAA's efforts to supercharge the air traffic controller workforce benefit controller hiring, including at contract towers. The Federal Contract Tower (FCT) Program is leading a training and integration strategy to bring graduates of Collegiate Training Programs directly into the FCT workforce, bolstering staffing levels and operational resilience.

Airspace Safety

Background:
Montana has airspace around growing cities that are experiencing a diverse aircraft fleet mix of commercial airlines, military, firefighting, and other aircraft. Some of these congested airspaces lack radar coverage as a result of surrounding high mountainous terrain.

Question Z4:
What measures will Congress take to improve radar and surveillance infrastructure in mountainous regions where gaps in coverage pose a risk to aviation safety and limit air traffic control effectiveness?

Answer: The FAA ensures safety in all U.S. airspace, including mountainous regions, through a combination of procedures, services, and equipment. We continuously evaluate enplanements and total operations, as well as analyze aircraft traffic patterns and airspace to ensure that the provided procedures, services, and equipment are appropriate for the level of activity in the

airspace. As part of this review, the FAA considers providing additional surveillance capabilities in all regions, including mountainous ones.

Background:
I am concerned not only about the spate of recent accidents involving aircraft but also by the number of "near misses." While the focus on buying new, upgraded and modern technology is admirable and necessary, the fact remains that most mishaps are traced back to human error. Rigorous training and adequate staffing will make a big difference, but you must employ AI-based technology that not only makes the human-in-the-loop better, but also compensates for that human's inherit weaknesses and the system's structural biases.

Question Z5:
Who on your team is the point person for the development, procurement or acquisition of technology designed to identify, manage, and mitigate "human-in-the-loop" errors, which are a primary causal factor in most aviation-related mishaps?

Answer: FAA's Mission Support Services conducts operational needs assessments to identify requirements for systems to enhance safety and mitigate errors. FAA's Program Management Organization ensures the procurement and acquisition of technology is aligned to address those identified requirements. For example, FAA automation systems have requirements, using safety logic, to provide alerts to air traffic controllers for potential conflicts, including as a result of human or equipment error, between aircraft, or aircraft and terrain. Recently, leveraging this process allowed the FAA to rapidly procure and implement the Surface Awareness Initiative (SAI) to provide surface situational awareness to air traffic controllers. This cost-effective technology provides controllers with timely and accurate depictions of aircraft and vehicles on the entire airfield in all weather conditions.

Background:
I sense that there is developing a preference for one big fix to the system, a single, comprehensive solution. Given the two-decades experience with NextGen, that is troubling.

Question Z6:
Who on your team is in charge of evaluating, acquiring and deploying existing Commercial Off the Shelf (COTS) software solutions that enhance safety now and help the human-in-the-loop do what they do best – make good decisions – solutions that can be layered in to the current system while you take the time it will take to build a new system?

Answer: The FAA's Program Management Organization is responsible for managing the strategy, resource allocation, and coordination involved in evaluating, acquiring, and integrating Commercial Off the Shelf (COTS) software solutions. Prime vendors supply and customize these solutions to ensure they meet operational needs and are compatible with existing systems. FAA Engineering teams conduct technical evaluations, testing, and integration to seamlessly incorporate these solutions into the current infrastructure. Together, these teams are able to deploy solutions that enhance safety and efficiency, empowering human operators to make better decisions.

One example is the FAA's recently deployed SAI, which utilizes COTS software solutions that expand surface situational awareness at airports without existing surface surveillance capabilities. SAI is a vendor-managed and sustained product that utilizes Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADS-B) to display airport surface traffic to controllers in towers. It is currently operational at 18 airports with 32 additional sites planned to be operational by December 31, 2025.

Question Z7:
Do you currently have an audit system to evaluate pilot experience when upgrading licenses that have hours requirements? For example, when a pilot claims to have 1500 hours, the hours threshold for obtaining an Airline Transport Pilots License, do you have any technology and data drive validation system to check pilot logbooks when upgrading these licenses?

Answer: Pilot logbooks are self-reported documents. The FAA relies on the applicant's honesty and accuracy in reporting flight hours. As such, the FAA does not have a comprehensive, automated audit system or technology-driven validation system that cross-checks every pilot's logged flight hours against independent data sources. The FAA may perform checks if there is suspicion or reason to doubt reported hours. If requested, employers of pilots with Air Transport Pilot Certificates may provide flight hour verification letters or documentation that supports the hours claimed. If the FAA finds noncompliance or falsification of records, the consequences for the pilot can be severe—including certificate revocation.

Question Z8:
When a pilot is involved in a mishap, do you have the ability to validate currency, experience, and the performance track record or do you take the log book at face value?

Answer: The FAA has multiple ways to validate a pilot's currency, experience, and performance. The pilot logbook (whether paper or electronic) is the most accurate means to validate currency and experience, provided it is kept current and up-to-date by the pilot. The FAA reviews them during interactions with pilots such as surveillance (e.g., ramp checks) or during document reviews for practical tests. Additional FAA pilot records are maintained with a pilot's certifications and ratings; enforcement actions or violations; and flight reviews (if reported). The FAA may also contact pilot schools or employers for corroborating records. There are systems to help determine a pilot's performance track record (e.g., Pilot Records Database); however, not all experience is required to be logged in that system. FAA verifies and cross-checks pilot currency, experience, and performance with multiple sources and does not rely on the pilot's logbook alone during an accident or incident investigation.

Question Z9:
Do you have any systems that operate in near real time that determine if a pilot filing a flight plan has a valid medical and pilots license? If so, please explain that system and how you are able to ensure that pilots are not flying with expired medical certificates and licenses.

Answer: Flight plans do not require pilot certificate or medical certificate status. All pilots are required to comply with the Code of Federal Regulations. The FAA may check compliance with

these requirements during interactions with pilots, such as surveillance (e.g., ramp checks) or during document reviews for practical tests.

Question Z10:
Additionally, how do you ensure that pilots are maintaining FAA mandated currency requirements for landing, instrument flight time, instrument approach types, and mandatory flight reviews?

Answer: The pilot logbook (whether paper or electronic) is the most accurate means to validate these requirements, provided it is kept current and up-to-date by the pilot. The FAA may check compliance with these requirements during interactions with pilots, such as surveillance (e.g., ramp checks) or during document reviews for practical tests. The FAA may also contact pilot schools or employers for supporting documents and records.

Question Z11:
What systems are in place to validate that a pilot is flying with the appropriate type rating when they file a flight plan? Who is responsible for validating that information prior to a flight?

Answer: Flight plans do not require pilot certificate. All pilots are required to comply with the Code of Federal Regulations. The FAA may check compliance with these requirements during interactions with pilots, such as surveillance (e.g., ramp checks) or during document reviews for practical tests.

Question Z12:
If a pilot is charged with a DUI, drug conviction, or felony, do you have any process or technology that ensures that a flight plan will not be approved? Is it the pilot's responsibility to self-report?

Answer: No, information regarding a pilot charged with a DUI, drug conviction, or felony is not required on a flight plan. In accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations, a pilot is required to self-report such information, but not on a flight plan.

Question Z13:
Outside of a direct supervisor, when there is one present, do you have any technology to evaluate the communication performance of an air traffic controller with regard to procedural compliance? Is there a system to provide a track record of performance over time?

Answer: Yes, the Air Traffic Organization employs a structured and comprehensive system to evaluate air traffic controller communication and procedural compliance, even in the absence of direct supervisory observation. This framework is governed by FAA Order 3400.20, Individual Performance Management for Operational Personnel, which outlines the processes for evaluating controller performance. To assess communication and procedural adherence, the FAA uses quality control processes that include live and recorded monitoring of voice communications, radar data analysis, and direct observation. Performance is tracked over time using written documentation such as operations oversight reviews and proficiency checks. These records are used for feedback and accountability.

The FAA also uses systems such as Voice Communication Systems to capture and replay communications for review. Additionally, analytical platforms like the Comprehensive Electronic Data Analysis and Reporting system are used to identify trends and inform performance reviews. These technologies support accurate assessments of procedural compliance and decision-making.

Question Z14:
Outside of a direct supervisor, when there is one present, do you have any technology to evaluate the communication performance of a pilot with regard to procedural compliance? Is there a system to provide a track record of performance over time?

Answer: The FAA has minimum qualifications and certificate-level expectations of performance for every FAA-certificated pilot. When the FAA learns of a pilot's noncompliance with regulations, including deviations from air traffic controller instructions, the FAA has several databases that are used to track that activity. With respect to pilot communication with air traffic controllers, the FAA has databases and tools that track pilot deviations that are tied to an airman record, which provide an indicator of pilot performance.

Question Z15:
Do you have a system to evaluate performance of air traffic control performance in aggregate? For example, how does Los Angeles Tower compare to Reagan Tower with regards to communication clarity, consistency, and compliance with standard communication compliance?

Answer: The FAA uses several mechanisms to support comparative analysis at the facility level. Under FAA Order 3400.20, *Individual Performance Management for Operational Personnel*, performance data is gathered locally through operations oversight reviews, on-the-spot corrections, and proficiency checks. While primarily designed to support individual and team performance, these tools also provide insight into facility-level trends over time. In addition, operational skills assessments, external compliance verification, runway incursion rates, and quality assurance programs within the Air Traffic Organization conduct systematic reviews of operational data, including voice communications and radar tracks, to assess adherence to standard procedures and phraseology.

Question Z16:
What technology is being used to map communications of hazardous conditions between pilots and air traffic controllers? Are air traffic controllers taking hand written notes and passing that information along to pilots over the radio or is there a technology being used to streamline this process?

Answer: The FAA is working to launch an Enterprise Information Display System (E-IDS) to provide controllers with a single display for quick reference information necessary to safely manage aircraft. E-IDS will replace multiple existing information displays—some that still use older technology such as floppy disks—into one easy-to-use platform with a common look and feel that will enable consistency across facilities.

The E-IDS solution will implement a centralized, cloud-ready architecture while also leveraging current FAA investments in enterprise infrastructure and services. The benefits include secure, timely display and correlation of relevant operational information from authoritative data sources via System Wide Information Management (SWIM)-based information services, such as Notices to Airmen (NOTAMs), special activity airspace (SAA) schedules, status, and weather information.

Additionally, the E-IDS solution includes capabilities for standardized entry and dissemination of pilot reports (PIREP), real-time observations of conditions that could be deemed hazardous, allowing dissemination by air traffic controllers to other operators flying in close proximity. This process is currently dependent on air traffic controllers entering paper records both in the PIREP system and then into the En Route Information Display System (ERIDS). The supervisor then enters the same information into the Aeronautical Information System Replacement (AISR) which provides the information to other facilities.

Question Z17:
Why are ASRS reports able to be filled out and submitted by members of the public who do not currently hold a FAA pilots license? Why is there not a validation process to authenticate the credentials of that individual filling out that report? We know that ASRS reports are anonymous, but why are we not able to authenticate credentials prior to said individual completing the report before it become anonymous?

Answer: The Aviation Safety Reporting System (ASRS), managed by NASA, allows submissions from anyone involved in aviation, not just FAA-licensed pilots, to capture valuable safety insights from a diverse group of industry stakeholders (e.g., air traffic controllers, mechanics, flight attendants, ground crew, or even passengers). Requiring credential validation before submission could create a barrier that discourages reporting and reduces the volume of safety data collected, undermining ASRS's purpose. Anonymity encourages open reporting without fear of reprisal, and pre-submission authentication risks creating traceable links to reporters' identities. ASRS filters out unreliable reports through post-submission analysis, where analysts assess narratives for consistency and relevance. Restricting submissions to only FAA-licensed pilots would exclude valuable perspectives from other stakeholders who witness or experience safety events.

Question Z18:
Why are ASRS reports not integrated with positional data and weather reports to ensure accuracy?

Answer: ASRS prioritizes reporter confidentiality to encourage voluntary safety incident reporting without fear of reprisal. Positional data and detailed weather information are often avoided to prevent specific times and locations from being used to expose the identity of reporters. Many ASRS reports include submitter-provided positional and weather details, but NASA's de-identification process generalizes or removes data like specific locations, dates, or times to protect anonymity while retaining relevant weather context. The FAA and aviation community are exploring technologies to enhance data utility without compromising confidentiality. Initiatives like the Aviation Safety Information Analysis and Sharing (ASIAS)

program aim to correlate ASRS data with external sources in a privacy-preserving way. These efforts, alongside increased reporting encouragement, seek to improve systemic risk identification while maintaining trust in the ASRS.

Question Z19:
What technology is in place to identify the riskiest pilots and operators such that early intervention happens prior to a mishap occurring?

Answer: Voluntary safety reporting and proactive safety programs work together to support a data-driven approach to help pilots and operators identify risks or risky behavior before it becomes a safety event or an accident. These systems also support systemic issue identification, aid in trend analysis, and are used by the aviation community and the FAA in developing targeted mitigations against systemic risks.

Flight Operations Quality Assurance (FOQA) and Flight Data Monitoring (FDM) are key programs that collect and aggregate digital flight data, analyze that data, and identify risks and accident precursors to help a pilot or operator mitigate those issues before an accident or incident occurs. Aviation Safety Action Program (ASAP) and Aviation Safety Reporting System (ASRS) are programs that provide non-punitive avenues for pilots and operators to report safety concerns and errors without fear of punishment/enforcement.

There are also related programs in FAA's Flight Standards organization, such as the Compliance Program/Risk-Based Oversight (RBO). This program uses data to prioritize FAA oversight based on risk, focusing resources on the operators and individuals most likely to pose safety concerns. Early intervention capabilities include Safety Assurance System (SAS) assessments and data profiles to tailor surveillance. Another program is the Safety Management System (SMS), which provides a structured approach to managing safety risks through reporting, risk assessment, and continuous improvement. SMS encourages internal identification and mitigation of hazards before they lead to incidents.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, HUD, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS FOR 2026

TUESDAY, JUNE 10, 2025.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

WITNESS

HON. SCOTT TURNER, SECRETARY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Mr. WOMACK. The subcommittee will come to order. Today, I welcome the Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Honorable Scott Turner, a Big Ten champion in a previous life. Mr. Secretary, I want to thank you for being here to discuss HUD's fiscal year 2026 budget request. I also want to thank you for your visit recently to my district in April. It was great to have you on the ground to see the impact of HUD programs in my district. Let me add, we caught a Razorback baseball game while we were there, and in a shameless plug, I will give my Razorbacks some credit for making it to Omaha, where they will play Saturday evening against those Bengal Tigers of LSU.

It is this committee's responsibility to complete our work on time. I believe we can achieve this goal, and I am pleased that under Chairman Cole's leadership, we have already begun marking up 12 appropriation bills for fiscal year 2026. At the same time, it is our expectation that the departments under our jurisdiction spend the funds consistently with the way we appropriate them. We appreciate your partnership as you continue to fully implement the funds Congress made available to HUD for fiscal 2025. HUD's request for new budget authority in fiscal year 2026 is $33.2 billion. That is a $35.5 billion decrease. Let me say that again. That is not a typo. $35.5 billion decrease from the fiscal year 2025 enacted. HUD also uses mortgage guarantee fees from the Federal Housing Administration and the Government National Mortgage Association to offset its spending. The Congressional Budget Office estimates $6.9 billion in offsetting receipts for fiscal year 2026. That is a billion and a half dollars less than receipts in 2025. Regardless of what the administration sent over in its budget request, the CBO score is what we have to live with, which means we are in an even deeper hole than the President's budget, which suggests, to state the obvious, this is a significant reduction in the discretionary budget authority for the department.

Mr. Secretary, you heard in April in my district that many Arkansans are struggling to afford the rising cost of housing. Of course, it is not unique to Northwest Arkansas. The Census Bureau's American Community Survey found that 31 percent of American households were cost-burdened due to rising housing costs in 2023, including 27 percent of households with a mortgage and 50 percent of households with rent. This is why HUD's impact is felt in every district. Through its rental assistance programs, HUD ensures that the poor, veterans, the elderly, and those with disabilities can live with dignity. It provides economic development dollars for local governments, helps fight home-based hazards, and provides a hand-up for communities recovering from disasters.

Because of your department's important mission, Secretary Turner, I am deeply concerned about the deep cuts the administration's budget makes to HUD. These proposed cuts would radically affect HUD's mission and operations. I am interested in hearing how a $27.6 billion reduction to HUD's rental assistance programs will help HUD serve our Nation's most vulnerable. Your proposal is light on details on how the formula for your proposed state rental assistance program will ultimately work. I am also curious how HUD will support community development in low-and moderate-income communities when some of its most important and popular programs, like community development block grants, have been zeroed out. These programmatic changes need to go through the authorizing committees, particularly the proposals to block grant assistance to the states and the dramatic changes on how we combat homelessness in America. These ambitious proposals require an all-in effort. I welcome ongoing dialogue with our authorizing colleagues.

HUD's program should work better for the American people. You and I have discussed how there is fat to cut at HUD. But if we cut too deep and if we cut too fast, HUD's programs will not serve the communities you and I have pledged to help. I look forward to learning about your goals for HUD for this upcoming fiscal year and beyond. This subcommittee stands ready to work with you to better serve all Americans as we write this year's THUD bill.

I would now like to recognize the Ranking Member and my partner in this effort, the gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. Clyburn, for his opening statement.

Mr. CLYBURN. Thank you very much Mr. Chairman, and welcome Mr. Secretary. I think we can all agree that housing is a basic human need and serves as a foundation for education, health, and financial outcomes for nearly every family in America. And where you live matters. Without a safe and stable place to live, it is difficult for families to improve educational outcomes, maintain good health, or increase their earnings and build wealth.

Across the country, more than 771,000 people are experiencing homelessness, and 75 percent of low-income renters spend more than half of their income on rent. According to the Census Bureau, last year, the annual cost of renting grew faster, 3.8 percent, than home values, 1.8 percent, for the first time since 2011. This comes at a time when more than 56 percent of African American households and 53 percent of Hispanic households pay more than 30 percent of their income on rent, compared to less than 47 percent of

White Americans. Meanwhile, because of existing budget constraints, only one in five families can receive Federal rental assistance. Despite these despairing realities, your department's 2026 budget request proposes to cut HUD funding by more than half. This is not only unacceptable but unrealistic, given the dire need to lower the cost of living for Americans.

As the Secretary of your budget proposal to eliminate Section 8 public housing, housing for the elderly, housing for persons with disabilities, housing for persons with HIV/AIDS, and the continuum of care programs. Instead, you are proposing to establish a so-called state rental assistance program to block grant rent payments via a formula you have yet to define. Your budget also proposes to eliminate nearly all of HUD's housing construction, supply, and preservation programs. Time does not permit me to enumerate all of them. These so-called reforms would shift HUD program costs onto low-income residents. And I have yet to see from your budget evidence that funding that we could save in these time limits and work requirements if they become law. This doesn't help families who already are working multiple jobs to become self-sufficient. Instead, it creates chaos and financial uncertainty and pushes these families into more severe trade-offs. A choice of feeding your family, paying for medications, or paying rent.

Lastly, I would be remiss if I did not highlight the cuts to fair housing enforcement and your attempts to deregulate long-standing civil rights law. Mr. Secretary, let's remember the long and painful history that led to the creation of the Fair Housing Law. The Federal Housing Administration, banks, and insurance companies literally drew red lines on maps around the neighborhoods where they refused to provide home loans and insurance to otherwise qualified home buyers. I know. I was born in one of them, and I currently live in one of them.

This discrimination extended to Black veterans returning from World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. These men and women had served their country yet were excluded from the GI Bill's housing benefits that were transformational for White families. Black Veterans were denied VA-backed loans. Of the first 3,350 VA home loans in Mississippi, only two went to blacks. Not 2 percent. Two out of 3,350. Not even fighting for our country abroad earned Blacks a fair shot at the American Dream here at home.

Black families were denied the primary path to building generational wealth, and that created a racial wealth gap that persists to this day. I know this as well. I serve on two of the boards of the predecessor banks to what is now Bank of America. I chaired the Community Reinvestment Act Committee, and I served on the Audit Committee. I led the investigations into my own bank for its discrimination. The Fair Housing Law of 1968 represents a simple but crucial promise that every American would have an equal opportunity to secure safe, decent housing.

Unfortunately, since the start of this administration, we have seen an attack on long-standing laws that were enacted to stop excluding Blacks from the drapelessness of this country. The current state of housing and the cost of living in America calls on us to question our National priorities. Unfortunately, Mr. Secretary, this budget proposal ignores far too many realities, and it is not a re-

flection of what should be the values of our country. It is an exploitation of our most vulnerable.

Mr. Chairman, I implore my colleagues on this panel to work together to find some real solutions to the housing crisis and drive down the cost of living, not increase the economic burdens on every American. And I yield back.

Mr. WOMACK. I thank the ranking member. Before I introduce our witness this morning, the chair recognizes a very familiar face in the front row on the HUD staff, Graydon Daubert, former staffer for this subcommittee. Mr. Secretary, you got a really good one there.

Secretary TURNER. Indeed, sir.

Mr. WOMACK. But stop the poaching.

Secretary TURNER. It is a team. We are all one team.

Mr. WOMACK. He is a good man and a valuable asset. And I know you will enjoy his service to your organization.

At this time, I am going to recognize you for your opening statement. The entire prepared statement will be included in the record.

Secretary TURNER. Yes.

Mr. WOMACK. But we are going to give you 5 minutes to briefly summarize your comments, and then we will open our question and answer period. And with that, Mr. Secretary, the floor is yours.

STATEMENT OF HON. SCOTT TURNER

Secretary TURNER. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. And good morning to you, Chairman Womack, Vice Chair Bice, Ranking Member Clyburn, and all the distinguished members of this subcommittee. Thank you for this opportunity to testify today in support of President Trump's 2026 budget for the United States Department on Housing and Urban Development. And again, thank you, Chairman Womack, for having me in Arkansas and showing me innovative housing solutions there in your district in April.

Members, we have a small window of opportunity to help every American achieve the dream of home ownership. And the clock is indeed ticking. As of this past April, the National median home price is $414,000, up from more than $341,000 in April of 2021. And this is a dramatic increase of more than 21 percent. It became very hard for Americans to afford homes due to the policies of the Biden administration, which have been marked by negligence and a lack of stewardship of American taxpayer dollars.

We cannot keep running the same plays that are causing Americans to lose. It is time to run new plays and get a new playbook, and this budget, the President's fiscal year 2026, is indeed that new playbook. It requests $43.5 billion for the Department of Housing and Urban Development to fund critical programs and provide greater fiscal responsibility and restraint. It carries out President Trump's Day One directive to increase housing supply and make it affordable again. This budget supports HUD's mission, and we will indeed maximize the funds Congress, and you and your colleagues provide to us, no matter what the amount, be it $10 billion or $10.

We have been taking inventory of every program and found HUD's rental assistance to be full of waste, fraud, and abuse. It is broken and deviated from its original purpose, which is to temporarily help Americans in need. HUD assistance is not supposed to

be permanent. It should be a trampoline, not a hammock, not a resting place. It is supposed to be like a Treadway, which is a military bridge which is used temporarily to get over obstacles and then is removed.

We are also eliminating radical political agendas and wasteful spending at HUD. We identified as an example $260 million in savings for taxpayers. We canceled $4 million in DEI contracts that had nothing to do with HUD and recovered an additional $1.9 billion from inactive contracts that should have been closed out during the Biden administration. We have seen that pouring money into programs just fuels its existing status, which is not good. No. Here we are, reversing course to be efficient and effective, not bloated and bureaucratic. We want to be efficient and effective, not bloated and bureaucratic.

We are also undoing harmful regulations, including the Obama-Biden era, affirmatively furthering fair housing rule, which effectively turned HUD into a National zoning board. We are cutting red tape, and that is important. But we are also increasing the housing stock and opportunities for first-time home buyers. The Federal Housing Administration, FHA, which insures mortgages on more than 7 million homes and has insured mortgages for more than 140,000 first-time home buyers since January when President Trump returned to the White House. In addition, we are ending taxpayer-funded subsidies for HUD programs for illegal aliens entering our country.

But HUD is more than just housing. We streamline the disaster recovery process to help funding to get to communities more quickly and efficiently. For our tribal communities, we announced $2.2 million under the expansion of the Tribal HUD–VASH program to address veteran homelessness. And for our rural communities, we have convened roundtables in states around the country and discussed solutions for workforce housing. Returning HUD to its intended purpose, serving Americans through localized solutions.

The President's budget continues this approach by limiting the size and the spending of Federal programs. It proposes a state-based formula grant to encourage states to have skin in the game for the funding and design of their own rental assistance. The block grant will empower states to be more thoughtful and precise in their stewardship.

HUD currently has 30,000 program awardees and recipients. No wonder the system is plagued by abuse. Empowering states through this reimagined system would prone the administrative burden and maintain necessary assistance for the elderly and the abused. The budget also continues our commitment to promote economic independence and adopt compassionate common sense and historically a bipartisan conversation around reforms like time limits and work limits to encourage able-bodied residents to move up and get out of assisted housing.

It addresses our Nation's homelessness crisis by returning solutions to the local authorities. The President's budget saves billions of taxpayer dollars and helps restore fiscal responsibility. And Mr. Chairman, in order to properly serve the American people, we must care about our mission, care about the ones that we serve, and care about this country. And that is what HUD is, and that is what we

have returned to do, sir. So, the 2026 HUD budget request will allow us to operate at a standard of excellence that we have not in previous years and return the President's golden age. I am in support of this and look forward to Mr. Chairman talking to you and your distinguished colleagues. Thank you, sir, for your time.

[The information follows:]

STATEMENT OF
THE HONORABLE E. SCOTT TURNER
SECRETARY
OF
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT,
AND RELATED AGENCIES
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
PRESIDENT TRUMP'S FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET
June 10, 2025

Chairman Womack, Vice Chair Bice, Ranking Member Clyburn, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of President Trump's 2026 Budget for the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. I want to specifically thank Chairman Womack for showing me some innovative solutions to our housing affordability crisis in the heart of Arkansas' Third District last month.

We have a small window of opportunity to usher in the Golden Age of Homeownership. And the clock is ticking.

As of April, the **national median home price** is **414 thousand dollars**. Up from more than **341,000 dollars** in April of 2021—**marking a huge increase of more than 21 percent.**

And the average **30-year fixed mortgage rate** is almost **7 percent**, nearly **double** the rate in **2019**.

The numbers don't lie: It became significantly harder to own a home due to the policies of the Biden administration.

Simply put, we need a new playbook.

The President's Fiscal Year 2026 Budget **is** that playbook.

It requests **forty-three point five billion dollars** for the Department. But more than that, it represents the clear balance between funding mission critical programs and much-needed fiscal restraint.

It carries out President Trump's Day One Presidential Memorandum to decrease the cost and increase the supply of affordable housing.

And it reflects excellence, accountability, and purpose.

This budget supports HUD's mission to serve rural, tribal and urban communities. Much of that work is already underway.

And I want to emphasize this: We will maximize whatever funds Congress gives us, whether it's **10 billion dollars or just 10 dollars.**

At HUD, we are taking inventory of every program and process. We started this mission on day one and are continuing to take inventory each and every day. What we have found is a rental assistance system full of waste, fraud, and abuse; inefficiencies and bloated administrative costs; deteriorating public housing units; and a rent structure that punishes work and marriage among residents. Simply put, it is a broken system that has deviated from its original and intended purpose – to temporarily help Americans in need.

I want to focus on that word: "Temporary." HUD assistance is not supposed to be permanent. It's supposed to be a treadway, which is "a temporary, tactical pontoon bridge designed for use

by the military to cross water obstacles. It's a modular system made of sections that can be assembled quickly to form a bridge, allowing the passage of heavy vehicles and equipment."

So HUD rental assistance is meant to be a temporary station for people in need in the same way a treadway facilitates the crossing of an obstacle. Military engineers remove the treadway after successfully crossing.

We are taking steps to return HUD to its mission and to fix structural flaws.

We are consolidating our **40 plus** departmental management systems into **one, common** platform and implementing processes to ensure accountability throughout our **60 plus grant** programs so funding goes where – and to whom – it is intended for.

At the same time, we are eliminating radical political agendas and wasteful spending.

We identified **260 million dollars** in savings for the American people, cancelled **4 million dollars** in DEI contracts, and recovered an additional **1 point 9 billion dollars** from inactive contracts that should have been closed out under the Biden administration.

We have seen that pouring more money into programs, without thinking of long-term and sustainable solutions, has not and will not solve the issues of housing affordability and homelessness.

We want to be lean and mean, not bloated and bureaucratic.

We are also working to undo harmful rules and regulations, including the Obama-Biden-era Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule.

This mandate effectively turned HUD into a national zoning board, amounting to one of the greatest top-down intrusions ever undertaken by Washington.

It forced local authorities to implement a 100-question grading tool and undertake complicated demographic analyses of their residents and housing stock to target suburbs and reshape them as part of a misguided scheme of social engineering. It was an attack on the American, suburban dream and, really, the American family.

While cutting red tape is an important part of the equation, so is increasing the supply of land to build more housing.

The Department of Interior oversees more than **500 million** acres of federal land, including areas suitable for residential use.

We are working with Secretary Doug Burgum to identify underutilized federal land suitable for affordable housing development, while still protecting our public lands, parks and other important spaces.

As part of this partnership, we will work with governors and local leaders to better steward our public resources.

Finally, we are enforcing the rule of law at HUD and cutting off the taxpayer funded subsidization of HUD programs for illegal aliens, particularly when it comes to HUD-funded housing or HUD-backed mortgages.

But HUD is about **more** than housing.

Congress has provided HUD funding to support disaster recovery. But oftentimes, we found that **paperwork** was getting in the way of helping **people**.

So, we did something about it. We streamlined and simplified the disaster recovery process with an updated universal notice that incorporated over 700 stakeholder comments, and fully aligns with the President's Executive Orders.

For our tribal communities, we announced **2 point 2 million dollars** under the expansion of the Tribal HUD-VASH program to address veteran homelessness.

And for our rural communities, especially ones with growing populations, we convened stakeholder roundtables and discussed solutions for more workforce housing so people can work where they live and live where they work.

The impact of our policies underscores how we are returning HUD to its intended purpose--serving everyday Americans through localized solutions.

The President's Budget continues this local-first approach by limiting the size, scope and spending of Federal programs.

It is transformational and fundamentally changes how the government works **for the better**.

It proposes a state-based formula grant which would encourage states to have skin in the game for the funding and design of their own rental assistance programs without heavy-handed interference from Washington. The block grant process will also empower states to be more thoughtful and precise in their distribution and spending of taxpayer dollars.

HUD currently manages approximately **30,000 program awardees or recipients**, so there's no wonder the system is plagued by so much redundancy and abuse. Empowering states through the reimagined grant system would cut down on this administrative burden, help them do what the federal government has failed to do, and better serve the American people while maintaining necessary assistance for the elderly and disabled.

Importantly, the Budget also maintains HUD's commitment to promoting economic independence by adopting a compassionate, common-sense, and historically bipartisan conversation around reforms like time limits that will encourage able-bodied residents to move up and out of assisted housing.

Finally, it thoughtfully addresses our nation's homelessness crisis by welcoming efforts from faith-based service providers and supporting comprehensive **localized** solutions that acknowledge addressing homelessness goes far beyond housing.

Overall, the President's Budget would save billions of taxpayer dollars that can play an important role in balancing our nation's budget.

The 2026 HUD Budget Request will allow HUD to operate at a standard of excellence as part of the President's Golden Age and I am proud to support it.

Mr. WOMACK. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. There is at least one other committee meeting that is underway this morning that will carry some of our members away, including the ranking member of the full committee and the Chairman of the full committee, who may or may not come in time here. If they do, I want to recognize them——

Secretary TURNER. Okay.

Mr. WOMACK [continuing]. When they get here so that we can maximize their appearance.

Secretary TURNER. Yes, sir.

Mr. WOMACK. But the Defense Subcommittee is meeting this morning with the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs in order to get the posture hearing for that budget framework.

And so, now, let's go to the Q&A portion of our meeting this morning. Mr. Secretary, I appreciate your commitment to reforming our Federal rental assistance programs. The current system, as you have already articulated, is rife with inefficiency. The Administration's request proposes placing the major HUD rental assistance programs, tenant-based, project-based, and public housing, into a single state rental assistance block grant program that you referenced in your opening. This is a substantial change to business as usual.

Now, as we consider this proposal, I want to make sure that we are good stewards of taxpayer dollars while still meeting our obligation to help those most in need. I would also note that an overhaul of these programs would need the work of the authorizing committee, that of financial services. I support reforms that promote work, that reduce dependency and give state and local governments more control.

But I want to ensure that we are not creating gaps that could lead to increased homelessness or hardship for vulnerable populations.

So, Mr. Secretary, can you walk us through the concept of how proposed block grant programs like this would maintain assistance to the approximate 10 million Americans currently served by these programs?

Secretary TURNER. Yes, sir. Yes, sir, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your question. As you stated, and I stated in my opening remarks, you know, the status quo is not good enough. And the way that we have been going about serving the American people from a HUD perspective is no longer good enough.

And so, with this new paradigm,—it is indeed a paradigm shift. It is a culture shift. The goal here is not to serve less Americans. The goal here is to serve Americans better. And so, to give states an opportunity to have skin in the game, to identify their unique need, and then to be very deliberative about how they put the resources out as it pertains to rental assistance, as it pertains to taking care of the most vulnerable in their state. And there is a focus in this budget, Mr. Chairman, to take care of the elderly and those that are disabled.

And when you look at HUD, HUD has had record funding over the past few years. In the last 8 years, HUD's budget went from $42 billion to $77 billion. And yet, HUD lost focus of its most basic

mission. We are only able, currently, to serve one out of four eligible families at HUD. And that is unacceptable when you have a $70 to $77 billion budget. And so, this is a paradigm shift.

You know, playing in the NFL and playing in sports, you know, when you have a playbook, or you are running plays that are not, that are not working, the best teams that I have seen are those that go in, they make adjustments, say, well, we can no longer run this play because it is causing us to lose. So, let's run a new play. Let's reimagine what we are doing. I don't like to lose, Mr. Chairman, and Ranking Member. I don't like to lose, and I don't like the American people to lose. And so, we have to do something different in this country.

It is not about just throwing money at situations. It is about what we do with the money that we have to best serve effectively and efficiently the people of our country. And that is my mindset. That is my heart. It is not about the money for me. It is about the people. And we are returning HUD to that focus, mission minded. We understand what our call is, we understand who we have been called to serve, and we understand the critical mission. And so, at HUD, currently, that is what we are focused on.

Mr. WOMACK. So, to use a football vernacular, when we break huddle on this block grant program, what conditions will be in place? What will you do to ensure that we have adequate service levels for, you mentioned, the elderly, for the disabled, people that are very vulnerable in their lives? What assurances do we have? What can we do to ensure that there is a service level that is fitting for these individuals?

Secretary TURNER. Thank you, sir, and that is a great question. So, in this SRAP, State Rental Assistance Program, there is money in the budget from our PD&R program office at HUD to make sure that we work with states to implement an appropriate strategy and also to work with you and your colleagues on this committee to make sure that this strategy is serving the most vulnerable in our country.

HUD is a great facilitator of this, and we are very focused. And as you see in the budget, there is money set aside so that we don't just say there is a new program, but we can say this is how we are going to join in with states and join in with stakeholders to implement and execute this program. And so, those conversations have begun and will continue, and we welcome your input, you and your colleague's input, to make sure that this new strategy works effectively for the people we serve.

Mr. WOMACK. Thank you, sir. Mr. Clyburn.

Mr. CLYBURN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Let me, if I might consider—I am not going to do football. I played the game, not at the level you played it, but I am a pretty good golfer, and I know that If I have got 150 yards to get to the green, it doesn't matter what club I use. What matters is what skill I have got. That is what matters. And I always hear people say, what club do you use? What does it mean to you? You are not the same as I am. So therefore, at soon to be 85 years old, it is going to cost me a little more with a 6 iron that is going to cost this young man over here. So, get the right equipment.

Now, so if you tell me that HUD has been ineffective, do you cure ineffectiveness by refocusing or do you cure it by eliminating? So, if you say, well, I have been ineffective, you eliminate the funds, how does that make HUD effective? Tell me about refocus.

Secretary TURNER. Yes, sir. And I have heard that you are a great golfer. I do look forward to playing with you. Your 8 iron might be a different club than mine, but you are right; it is a skill.

I am reminded that during the previous administration, during COVID with a $70 billion budget, sir, HUD hired 2,000 people during COVID, most of which stayed home. And there was continuous waste, fraud, and abuse. And so, when you have that many people and still not carry out the job, and you have that much funding and still not carry out the job for the American people, then we have to refocus. And part of that refocus is taking inventory of staff, taking inventory of the budget, taking inventory where the budget is going. And currently, in the programs we have, we don't have a lot of purview, if you will, and transparency, if you will, where the money is going, is it serving those that are supposed to be serving. And so part of this refocus is to bring that back to house and bring it to the stage to say, now, let's have more transparency. Let's have more accountability. And so, when I look at refocus, and I look at the skill set, all of that, to me, is in the same bucket.

Mr. CLYBURN. Don't you——

Secretary TURNER. When you look at your people, are you doing a job you have been called to do? Are you doing at the level you have been called to do it? And is there transparency in the process that we have? And at HUD, that is what they are doing. And, sir, I said it in my confirmation process that we are going to take inventory of every program office at HUD, we are going to maximize the budget that we do have, and we are going to serve the people that we are supposed to be serving. So, the amount of people, the amount of money, that is not the deal here. Because with the tremendous amount of money and a tremendous amount of people, we haven't, prior to us getting here, carried out the job we have been called to carry out.

Mr. CLYBURN. I agree with you, but I think that to deal with COVID is a false. This is a false narrative here. I chaired the Select Subcommittee for the Coronavirus. I knew where the fraud was, and it wasn't in housing. The billions and billions and billions of fraudulent money went to some pretty wealthy people, at least one of whom is in this administration right now. So, that is not the criteria that we ought to use here. Let's look at what the needs are and how we need to equip ourselves for these needs.

Now, you mentioned the Obama-Biden administration. If you want to cure what you see to be the problem of the Obama-Biden administration, why would you advocate the Andrew Johnson and the Woodrow Wilson administrations? And I used those two administrations because I disliked them immensely, and they were Democrats. So, I want you to think this is policy. Woodrow Wilson was a Democrat and, I think, one of the worst presidents we ever had. So this is not policy here. This is whether or not we are going to have a program to meet the needs of the American people or whether we are going to just get rid of and throw out the baby with

the bathwater. And that is what you seem to be doing here with half of the budget. And then you tell me you want to refocus the agency with what? With what equipment? The five iron, or will you leave it in the bag?

Secretary TURNER. Well, I think it is the right equipment for the situation. And right now, prior to us being here, we haven't been using the right equipment for the right situation.

Mr. CLYBURN. So, what is the right equipment?

Secretary TURNER. Well, the right equipment, sir, is called transparency. It is called inventory. It is called, you know, let's refocus and let's have a new paradigm. And, you know, you talk about the Biden-Obama administration, and I make note to them just because that is what——

Mr. CLYBURN. No, you did.

Secretary TURNER. Yes, sir. Because that is where the rule came, not politics. And so, sir, I will assure you that my heart and my focus is on serving the American people. And we are refocusing in order to do that appropriately. Thank you, sir.

Mr. CLYBURN. Okay. I will yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. WOMACK. You will get a mulligan here and in another little while when we do a second round.

Mr. CLYBURN. I look forward to it.

Mr. WOMACK. How's that?

Mr. CLYBURN. Thank you.

Mr. WOMACK. Sheriff.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, ranking member. Mr. Secretary, you know we are facing historic shortages of affordable housing. And one of the, I thought, one of the best programs that HUD had was the SHOP program, where nonprofits would actually assist people in home ownership. And I can tell you, as a former sheriff, everywhere in my community, and we did this on purpose in Jacksonville, Florida, we went into the most challenged neighborhoods, working with these nonprofit groups who would then bring homeownership into these areas, these most challenged public safety areas, and everywhere that home ownership went up, violent crime went down. And so, that is why I love this SHOP program because it puts people into home ownership. I like SRAP, but I really want people to own homes because I know it changes the whole community. So can you tell me a little bit about, you know, how are we going to address this issue if we are doing away with SHOP?

Secretary TURNER. Thank you, Sheriff. I really appreciate it—sorry, Congressman. Thank you for your service in law enforcement. You know, again, I reiterate that this is a new way of looking at how we distribute funds. And by bringing in the states and bringing in localities and giving them the flexibility to identify programs, such as you stated, that have been successful, then they'll have the ability to continue to fund and work with those programs. I, too, am for the workforce. I, too, am for skills training and home ownership. Moving from rent to home ownership, moving from being subsidized to now living a life of self-sufficiency. And that is the heart here.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. So, if I could interrupt. So, you have SRAP, which is going to be basically a block grant for rental assistance

programs. And you are saying there is going to be another block grant process where programs like SHOP can be funded out of if the state or the city decides that is how they want to use those funds?

Secretary TURNER. No, sir. Not an additional block grant but included with.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Included in the SRAP?

Secretary TURNER. Yes, include with. When I say this, meaning that the states will have the authority and the flexibility to identify programs that are doing well and be able to not just fund those but support those opportunities in the states that you are talking about in particular, like SHOP, that you mentioned.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Yeah, but all of those others are rental assistance programs.

Secretary TURNER. They are. Yes, sir.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. You are saying that those dollars will also be used for home ownership, affordable home ownership?

Secretary TURNER. No, sir. What I am saying is that when you have—when you have programs that promote home ownership, when you have programs that promote——

Mr. RUTHERFORD. They won't promote——

Secretary TURNER. [continuing]. Individuals being able to buy homes, states will now be able to identify those better than the Federal Government. The Federal Government is not the one that identifies those unique needs like states. And so, this, the whole paradigm is to return that back to the states as it pertains to rental assistance that we talked about. And so, this is a refocusing of taking the Federal Government out of it and putting the states in charge and in control of how they want to distribute the funds.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Okay. Let me ask one more question in this round. In Jacksonville, we had a project-based rental assistance program, Eureka Gardens. I don't know if you are familiar with that, but this is dealing with public housing units and basic safety and quality standards and how those complaints and inspections are handled. What sort of oversight do you see HUD having for those—for those rental facilities? You know, this one got so bad that we actually had an explosion, and I mean, it was horrible. How do we improve the inspector training and accountability to make sure those inspections are consistent and reliable across the board?

Secretary TURNER. Yes, sir. And HUD will still be involved, obviously, when it comes to inspections such as this. You know, I have traveled around the country and visited public housing authorities and seen some of the conditions that people are living in across our country. And some of them are deplorable. And so obviously, HUD will continue to be involved as such so that those public housing authorities are safe, that they are secure for the residents that are living there.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Okay. So even with the block grant, you are still going to be in the inspection business?

Secretary TURNER. Yes, sir.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I see my time is up. I yield back.

Mr. WOMACK. Thank you, Sheriff. Mr. Quigley.

Mr. QUIGLEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Secretary, I don't know if you really believe all this stuff or you are just parroting what you are told to say because—let me begin. I wrote reports on this that were detailed about how to streamline and consolidate government and make it more effective. Not because I hate it, but because it is so important and the resources are scarce. But there is absolutely no details. So, when you just say refocus and reform, it falls on deaf ears. It doesn't mean anything. You can talk about compassion, but no reform measures are going to be able to allow us to cut HUD by 50 percent and not have our most vulnerable people, seniors, kids, and people with HIV/AIDS on the street.

Mr. Secretary, you have to understand that housing is everything. Housing for people with HOPWA. HOPWA is health care. These people will die. There is no way you can believe that a 50 percent cut won't mean a dramatic increase in people being put on the street. So just—you can say what you want, but it is when you cut the programs like pro, which is designed to remove regulations, something you seem to be focused on, that are stopping localities from building more housing. It is just, it defies credibility. So, if you just want to say we got to cut these things because that is our plan, I would respect you a lot more than telling us that you care about people as you put them on the street.

So, let's just talk about HOPWA for a second. It zeros out HOPWA and says they currently can receive emergency short-term and medium-term assistance through the emergency grants program. But 64 percent of the people on HOPWA are not short-term folks. 2 years isn't enough for them. And the Emergency Solutions Grant, which is going to solve all the problems, is now supposed to absorb seven existing programs, including this, and a cut of $532 million.

I don't know if you have known anybody who died from HIV/AIDS. I have, so it is personal for people in my district and myself. So, what is the detailed plan that says those folks aren't going to go on the street where they won't get their medication and they'll die?

Secretary TURNER. Thank you, sir. And I will say, sir, I am not just speaking. I do actually care, and I do actually believe in what I am saying. If I didn't believe it, I wouldn't say it. You know, as a Christian, as a pastor, I care about all people. And when you talk about HOPWA, and you talk about the Emergency Solutions Grant, you know, this will help us to better serve people in the community. This will help us to more effectively and efficiently serve people in the community.

Mr. QUIGLEY. How?

Secretary TURNER. HUD had record funding. 770,000 people were homeless in January of 2024. And the point-in-time report, on one single night, January 2024, 770,000 people were homeless. And so, when I say refocus, I really mean to refocus because that is unacceptable when you have record funding and yet you have almost 800,000 people on the streets. Why would we continue to do the same thing that we have been doing, and it is not working appropriately?

Mr. QUIGLEY. So, the alternative is besides just saying we are going to refocus, you are going to find a place for these folks to stay

overnight. Okay, let's just talk us, Christians. There is something about the story of the Bible in Christ having not a place to stay, right? So that is on your mind. Faith without acts is dead.

Secretary TURNER. That is right.

Mr. QUIGLEY. What is your detail?

Secretary TURNER. Yeah, faith.

Mr. QUIGLEY. Besides saying that you have—your faith won't put a house over their head?

Secretary TURNER. Yes, sir. Faith, what I was going to say, faith without action is dead. And this is the action that we are going to take.

Mr. QUIGLEY. What?

Secretary TURNER. To do it better.

Mr. QUIGLEY. How?

Secretary TURNER. Because what we have been doing is not working. And I believe that——

Mr. QUIGLEY. What is plan B?

Secretary TURNER. I believe that you all, your committee, we should have been asking what and how way before today.

Mr. QUIGLEY. I wrote those reports.

Secretary TURNER. Yeah.

Mr. QUIGLEY. I am with you if you have details and how.

Secretary TURNER. Yes, sir.

Mr. QUIGLEY. But all you are doing is cutting and there is not even a transition period.

Secretary TURNER. Sir, we are going to be more effective and more efficient.

Mr. QUIGLEY. How?

Secretary TURNER. We are not just cutting. It is a new paradigm.

Mr. QUIGLEY. How?

Secretary TURNER. It is a new way to do things.

Mr. QUIGLEY. Let's come up with more words than compassion and paradigm. Detailed plans where these——

Secretary TURNER. Yes, sir.

Mr. QUIGLEY [continuing]. Folks are going to stay in the meantime.

Secretary TURNER. And we look forward to working with you and your staff on—on those strategies, and I commit to that. It is not just words. We will be happy to work with you, sir, if you are willing to work with us.

Mr. WOMACK. Thank you, Mr. Quigley.

Secretary TURNER. Okay.

Mr. WOMACK. Before I recognize Mr. Gonzales, who is our next questioner, I am going to be stepping aside from the gavel here for the remainder of this hearing so that I can get to the Defense Subcommittee and ask some appropriate questions there. I will be yielding the gavel to Ms. Bice here after this line of questioning. Mr. Gonzales.

Mr. GONZALES. Thank you, Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Secretary, for your service to our—to our great country. I am a military veteran. I served 20 years in the military. Chairman Womack's a veteran. Secretary Zinke is a veteran. My question is on homeless veterans. My first question. One of the issues I care deeply about is homeless veterans. Back in 2024, HUD identified

that on any given night, there are more than 32,000 homeless veterans. That is 32,000 too many. This issue hits close to home in my district in rural parts like Alpine and Van Horn, where there is little to no affordable housing supply, and in urban areas like San Antonio and El Paso, the housing availability for homeless veterans through HUD is often substandard or inadequate. Secretary Turner, would you be willing to visit my district so we can work together on this issue and find solutions to address the challenges facing both rural and urban homeless veterans?

Secretary TURNER. Yes, sir, Congressman Gonzales, thank you. It is great to meet you. I do commit to visiting you and your district to come up with these viable solutions and also working with my colleague, Secretary Collins, as it pertains to veterans and veterans homelessness.

Mr. GONZALES. Thank you for that. My next—well, will be a comment on the Community Development Block Grants. The Community Development Block Grants have been a vital tool in my district, especially in the Colonias. I mean, these are communities that don't have running water. It is absolutely atrocious the conditions they are in. They are in predominantly rural, unincorporated communities that often lack less than basic infrastructure like running water, waste system, electricity, and paved roads. But I would also urge the HUD to take a serious look at preserving this program or making sure that it just isn't completely removed with the right safeguards in place. I believe we got to find the waste and the abuse, and I love the idea of how do you change it, right? It is not working. How do you fix it? So, to that, continuing to find critical and infrastructure improvements in this community through that program I think is important.

My next question is on—is on foster youth. One of the things I encouraged—I was encouraged to see in HUD's budget request was the inclusion of $25 million for foster youth to independence grants. As a member of the Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth, I recognize how critical these programs are for—how critical these programs are for helping youth transition out of the foster care system. Last year, I passed a bill in the House Find and Protect Your Foster Act. So clearly, it is important. Is HUD—my question is this, is HUD actively helping to track the number of fostered youth who experience homelessness, and what steps is HUD taking to ensure vulnerable populations don't fall through these cracks?

Secretary TURNER. Yes, sir. Thank you, Congressman. And we, too, are glad and excited that we have money in the budget to make sure that our youth that are aging out of foster care have a solid ground to land on, as we know that being in foster care is very difficult for our youth. And when I was in the House of Representatives sitting on the committee dealing with foster care and our youth in foster care, so I, too, have a heart for this and so happy to be working with the First Lady and her team and you and your team on how we help, from a HUD perspective, these youth that are aging out of foster care to make sure that they have safe and sustainable places to stay and get on a good trajectory for their lives.

Mr. GONZALES. I appreciate you making it a priority, and I look forward. Once again, I like the idea of, hey, how do we—how do

we reimagine things? And I think this is a positive part of that reimagination. Very personal to me. My wife was a foster child, and so I want to make sure that we work together to see that program get off the ground and grow and be productive.

My last question is on law enforcement housing. I represent nearly half of the overall Southern border places like Eagle Pass, Del Rio, El Paso. My district has been ground zero for this border crisis. As a result, we have seen a large surge of law enforcement personnel from CBP, and the National Guard deployed to this area. But in many cases, these are small rural communities, and there is simply not enough housing supply to meet the need. Out in West Texas, for example, I have been fighting to secure housing for first responders. My question is this, given the President's commitment to supporting first responders, what is HUD doing to ensure that first responders and those that are deployed to these areas have affordable and adequate housing?

Secretary TURNER. Yes, sir, Congressman, and thank you for that. You know, I, too, have a heart, and it is top priority of our first responders and all Americans to make sure that they have affordable, sustainable places to stay. And obviously, you know, we have our FHA program, and the President, too, is a priority of his. And so, we look forward to working with you and your colleagues and your staff on how we can ensure and help our first responders as they, too, look for housing to purchase and rent in your district and around the country.

Mr. GONZALES. Thank you for that. Because as we surge these people to these areas, there is just—there is just no housing. And that is, that has been one of the take-backs. You can't just put pieces on a board that you got to drill down a little bit. So, thank you again for your testimony. I look forward to working with you. And Chairwoman, I yield back.

Secretary TURNER. Thank you.

Mrs. BICE [Presiding]. Thank you. Next up we have Mrs. Watson Coleman. You have 5 minutes, Mrs. Coleman.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Thank you. Welcome, Mr. Secretary. You have said a lot today. You have not answered one question, but you are consistent. You have not answered the how's, all the questions that the Republicans have asked. And you certainly haven't asked—answered how you are going to make something happen on this side either. What I am concerned about is how you could even open your mouth and say that you care about this population or these populations when you are willing to come here and advocate for a 51 percent reduction in the budget. And so, I want to go over a little bit of this stuff with you because I don't think you are refocusing. I think you are devastating, and this is a ludicrous proposal.

I am sure you know that 74 percent of Americans are concerned about housing, and 771,000, you mentioned it, are currently homeless. I know you know the 7.6 million, including 2.9 million children, are facing the threat of eviction. I know that you know that this budget does not usher us into any alleged golden age but perhaps a gilded age. I am unsure how you and this administration arrived at the decision to cut HUD by 51 percent, specifically $45.6

billion, during a period of rising homelessness and housing insecurity. I want to remind you that 4 years ago you were here.

You and the administration are going to try to sell the American people a story that these cuts are justified. And you are giving—while you want to give your money back to very wealthy donors. It is my job to show the American people that these are unjustifiable cuts. And so here, let us go with this.

A 40 percent cut to rental and homeless assistance programs totaling $27.25 billion. A $53 billion cut to Section 8 rental assistance. An $8.8 billion cut to public housing. A $1.2 billion cut to Sections 202 and 811 programs for the elderly and disabled. A $505 million cut to HOPWA. A $22 billion cut to HUD's Housing Construction Supply and Preservation program. A $1.25 billion cut to the HOME program. You care about home ownership? I don't think so.

A $75 billion cut to the Choice Neighborhoods program. A $12 million cut to the SHOP program. A $6 million cut to Rural Capacity Building grants. A $10 million cut to the PRICE program. A $296 million cut to the Lead Hazard Reduction and Healthy Home program's grant. A $3.3 billion cut to Community Development Block Grants. A $100 million cut to PRO Housing. A $196 million cut to Family Self-Sufficiency programs. A $58 million cut to housing counseling. A $101.4 million cut to fair housing.

Now, Secretary, I am sure you know that these cuts will successfully increase housing instability and evictions. I am sure you know that those facing evictions don't have a right to counsel. I am sure you also know that your budget is making massive cuts to legal aid for those facing evictions and homelessness. So I am sure you know that cutting rental assistance, eliminating fair housing protections, and defunding legal aid will not reduce homelessness and eviction in this country.

I am sure you are aware that you are worsening the housing crisis with your budget proposal. If you really believe that you would not, you would not slash your agency's budget by over 50 percent.

And by the way, you talk about giving the authority back to the state. You want to give them authority, but you don't want to give them resources. You can't do anything with your rhetoric and your narrative. You got to show with your actions and with your resources.

And last but not least, I want you to tell me what DEI contracts you have terminated. What does that mean? Did you terminate contracts to veterans? Did you terminate contracts to disability organizations? Did you terminate contracts to Black contractors? Did you terminate to Latino or Asian or whatever? What the heck are you talking about eliminating DEI contracts in HUD? Who is your population? Who should you be looking after? It is shameful and you ought to be ashamed of being here.

You don't have to answer any question because you haven't answered one yet.

Secretary TURNER. Ms. Vice Chairman, I would actually like to answer her.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. I yield back. I don't need your answer.

Secretary TURNER. Okay. Thank you, Congress lady. You know, and thank you for stating all the stats of our budget. We really ap-

preciate that because it just reiterates my point that with record funding, HUD has still not carried out its most basic mission. And I have answered questions.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Don't act like you haven't been here, sir. Just 4 years ago, you were here. Don't act like you care——

Mrs. BICE. Mrs. Watson Coleman.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN [continuing]. About this population.

Mrs. BICE. Mrs. Watson Coleman, if you will let him answer the question.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. I don't need——

Mrs. BICE. Your time has expired.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Listen, I reclaimed my time back. I yielded my time. You want to let him waste your time? You let him.

Secretary TURNER. Thank you, Madam Vice Chair. And thank you, Mrs. Watson Coleman. Thank you for reiterating my point that status quo is not good enough, that also homelessness has gone up in spite of record funding. And——

Mrs. BICE. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. If we could move on.

Secretary TURNER. Oh, sure.

Mrs. BICE. The gentleman from Alabama, Mr. Strong, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Secretary TURNER. Okay, thank you.

Mr. STRONG. Thank you, Chairwoman Bice and Ranking Member Clyburn, for holding this hearing today, and to our hardworking subcommittee staff. Secretary Turner, thank you for joining us today.

During my 26 years on the Madison County Commission, the second largest county in the state of Alabama, I became extremely familiar with the benefits and bureaucratic burdens of HUD dollars. Something I hear consistently from local communities in North Alabama is that HUD's regulatory burdens are often delay projects. Some projects are delayed to the point where they are penalized for not spending funds they couldn't access due to HUD's review timelines.

Secretary Turner, how are you working with local communities to ensure that HUD acts as a partner, not a barrier in project delivery?

Secretary TURNER. And thank you, Congressman Strong. Appreciate your service, sir.

You know, we have a tremendous staff at HUD that is very communicative and open, has open lines of communication with constituencies around the country to make sure that we are being efficient and effective as it pertains to getting resources out of the door and working with yourself, your staff, and this committee is a goal that I commit to continue doing to making sure the resources are going out, sir, in an effective and efficient manner.

And as we have taken inventory and as you alluded to, to take down the burdensome and the bureaucracy and the red tape is a goal of ours, to make sure that we are serving the American people properly.

Mr. STRONG. What is your plan to streamline permitting review and compliance processes to prevent these punishing penalties for Federal inefficiencies?

Secretary TURNER. Sir, so right now, you know, we have a tremendous CFO team, and our CFO, Irv Dennis, is second to none in our country. And he and his team are putting in financial controls to make sure that we are streamlining properly as it pertains to the question that you asked in all of the processes that we have at HUD working with our constituency around America.

Mr. STRONG. Next, I would like to discuss the accountability and flexibility with HUD grant programs. Local communities, including the growing mid-sized urban centers found in North Alabama, often have the most accurate understanding of their unique housing and development needs. The administration's budget proposal to consolidate multiple housing programs into block grants, such as the State Rental Assistance Program, appear to be a bold step forward in increasing efficiency and allowing states greater flexibility in addressing their unique housing needs.

Secretary Turner, could you elaborate on how these consolidations will help local communities to better allocate resources and reduce administrative burdens, ultimately leading to more effective outcomes for low- and moderate-income Americans?

Secretary TURNER. Yes, sir. And so, as you alluded to, you know, the streamline and the effectiveness, putting the resources back to the states will allow them to not only identify their unique needs, but also to be very deliberative and precise in how they distribute those funds around their state and in their localities. And so I am looking forward to this new strategy to put it back in the state's hands. While HUD obviously is a great convener and facilitator, but to give the states that flexibility, I believe, will help us to operate more efficiently and serve people better than we have in the past.

Mr. STRONG. Thank you. How are you implementing performance-based criteria that reward communities that responsibly leverage Federal funding?

Secretary TURNER. Sir, and that is a good conversation that we are having, an ongoing conversation that we are having right now. And we would welcome your ideas to how we can better do this from a performance base. I know at HUD internally we have a great performance-based strategy to where we make sure that people inside of HUD are performing the way that the American people have called us and expect us to perform. But, sir, I welcome your ideas as it pertains to that strategy.

Mr. STRONG. Thank you. Chairwoman, I yield back.

Mrs. BICE. The gentleman yields.

The gentlewoman from California, Mrs. Torres, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. TORRES. Thank you. Secretary Turner, I represent California's 35th Congressional District, a region that was severely hit by flooding and the recent Los Angeles wildfires. They have had a devastating impact not just my community, but the entire region. These fires displaced thousands of people, destroying homes, and devastated critical infrastructure. Yet the administration's budget for fiscal year 2026 proposes zero funding for the Community Development Block Grant, CDBG, money. And HUD has not requested CDBG disaster recovery funds to help California, specifically, and other disaster-stricken states.

Mr. Secretary, when will HUD, you, submit a request for disaster assistance to support recovery efforts in California?

Secretary TURNER. Thank you, madam. As you know, California has received disaster recovery funds. I myself was in L.A. a couple of months ago to visit families there and constituents there on the ground as it pertains to the wildfires.

Mrs. TORRES. Okay. California, sir, has not received a single penny in recovery funds for the recent wildfires. California is still owed $6 billion for wildfires and flooding that occurred last year. Do you believe that state and local governments, already stretched thin, can fill the massive gap alone?

Secretary TURNER. You know, what I do know, ma'am, is that there has been a stewardship issue in California as it pertains to taxpayer dollars. And as I was there meeting with local authorities and leadership there, that is a point that I raised is that what are you doing with the resources that you do have? Because the people of California are not being served properly. And so to throw more money, if I may, ma'am, to throw more money at a situation when the money that has been sent has not been stewarded well, is something I believe that we need to take inventory of.

Mrs. TORRES. So I am going to reclaim my time because you are talking about wasting Federal dollars, but yet you are coming from an administration that seems to only care about the top 1 percent.

Let me tell you, the Federal minimum wage, in case you don't know, is $7.25. Can you tell me where in the U.S. can someone making those wages rent a one-bedroom apartment? Let me tell you, nowhere. Right now, families who lost their homes in wildfires are struggling trying to find a place to live. And the Federal Government has a responsibility, you have a responsibility to return our Federal dollars back to California to help communities in desperate need.

But here's what makes it even more unconscionable: that you are sitting here while California sends $83 billion more in Federal taxes than we receive back. We are literally funding your salary as well as housing programs in other states while our own veterans sleep on the streets, sir.

I fully support disaster aid request for California and for other states. The people rebuilding after a disaster deserve better than to be ignored and to have egos speaking words that mean nothing. What we need is actual actions. We need funding to ensure that we are able to provide the housing that we need.

Secretary TURNER. Thank you, ma'am. And I would say again, and I reiterate, it is a stewardship issue. It is not a funding issue.

Mrs. TORRES. You have no proof of stewardship issues. All you have been doing is talking around and around and stroking your ego, sir. Right here we need dollars and cents and we need programs that actually are going to house our veterans and our homeless population.

What you are doing with the cuts that you are demanding in this budget is you are destroying every single opportunity that we have built up, not just in my community, for people that have been severely addicted to narcotics, people recovering from those addictions, from illnesses, veterans in the street that, by the way, under the Obama administration we managed to have zero homeless peo-

ple and in San Bernardino County living in the streets. Okay? So don't come to me and tell me that it is an issue of not having accountability.

Secretary TURNER. Ma'am, did you know homeless was up——

Mrs. TORRES. The accountability——

Secretary TURNER [continuing]. 16 percent in California?

Mrs. TORRES. The accountability lies in this most corrupt administration——

Secretary TURNER. And we just closed two——

Mrs. TORRES [continuing]. That we have had.

Secretary TURNER. Madam Vice Chair, we just had to close two field offices——

Mrs. TORRES. My time has expired, and I yield back to the chair.

Secretary TURNER. We just had to close two field offices in California——

Mrs. BICE. The gentlelady yields her time.

Secretary TURNER [continuing]. Due to the unrest going on in California. And so, I say it is time for a paradigm shift.

Mrs. BICE. The gentlelady has yielded her time back.

The gentleman from Arizona, Mr. Ciscomani, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Thank you, Chairwoman Bice. And thank you, Secretary Turner, for being here today. Really appreciate that.

I want to first like to ask about an issue that is top priority for me as a member of both this committee, but also the Veterans' Affairs Committee, and that is veterans homelessness. It has been brought up a couple of times, and I want to piggyback off what my colleague Tony Gonzales was talking about on that issue when he brought it up, but mine's a little more specific.

As you know, the HUD VASH program is a collaborative initiative between HUD and the VA that aims to end homelessness among veterans. While the HUD VASH program has made meaningful progress in reducing veteran homelessness, challenges like voucher underutilization and case manager storages persist still. So what steps is HUD taking to ensure veterans not only receive vouchers, but can successfully use them to secure permanent housing with the wraparound service that they need?

Secretary TURNER. Thank you, Congressman. Nice to meet you, sir. Again, you know, working with my colleague, Secretary Collins from the VA, we just met a couple weeks ago, and this is of top priority for us, our veterans in our country as it pertains to homelessness and housing. And also, to be able to have the states working closely with us to prioritize veterans I believe is a great strategy going forward. And, sir, we look forward to working with you and Representative Gonzales to have ideas and strategies to bring to the table where we can best serve our veterans.

Mr. CISCOMANI. What are some examples you would say that are—will be good to—that maybe HUD hasn't been doing so far on the voucher system? Because it is being underutilized, and we want to make sure that they have access to that. Is it awareness? Is it outreach? How can we get that information to our veterans?

I represent about 80,000 veterans in my district. In terms of congressional districts, it ranks about nine of the most populated areas for veterans: D–M Air Force Base, Fort Huachuca, and Sierra

Vista. So I have a large veteran population. I want to make sure that they have the access is there, but the ability to get it and that we are being proactive on reaching out to them with that.

Secretary TURNER. Yes sir. I believe awareness and outreach and also to take the bureaucracy out of the program and process to take down the red tape, to make sure that we are serving our veterans in the manner that we are supposed to be serving. So I agree, awareness, outreach, and taking down the burdensome regulations and red tape to make sure we prioritize our veterans.

Mr. CISCOMANI. A lot of red tape to tackle, that is for sure. I have got one more question that I want to fit in here.

I would like to thank you for mentioning in your testimony that HUD will begin to partner with faith-based organizations. I will also like to highlight a highly effective organization in my district, the Gospel Rescue Mission. The Gospel Rescue Mission's Center for Opportunity is one of the most effective homelessness providers in Arizona, offering not only shelter for homeless individuals, but also substance abuse services, faith-based consulting, employment training and placement, and much more. They even have a mobile cafe where their program training—where the program participants are able to gain on-the-job training.

Since 2019 they have helped 542 people make a full recovery from addiction, 2,356 people obtained permanent stable housing, assisted 1,960 people with finding a job, and have provided over a million meals for those in need, all without a single dollar from the government. They can tell us exactly what their ratio of success is. They know where their dollars are going. They know exactly what is going on without a single dollar from the government.

Can you please elaborate more on how HUD will work to support a faith-based provider such as the Gospel Rescue Mission? And what role do we do you see faith-based providers playing in HUD's mission moving forward?

Secretary TURNER. Thank you, sir. And you are exactly right. You know, the Gospel Rescue Mission, Union Rescue Mission in L.A., the Dream Center in L.A., and other faith-based and nonprofit organizations are the ones that are actually doing the work on the ground with data-driven results. And so historically, it is been hard for faith-based organizations to work with the government, but they are some of our best partners. And so, we want to make sure that we ensure that these partnerships are thriving around our country because they are the ones that are actually doing the work. And so, HUD has prioritized this in these public-private partnerships and working with faith-based institutions because they are the ones that are actually doing the work.

And so that is a priority of mine. It is a part of our team. And we look forward to working with you, sir, on that.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Thank you. They don't just say they are doing the work, their data proves it. Again, they can go to the numbers. I have asked many through these hearings about specific information and successive programs, data-driven results, and government often is not able to give those specific numbers and data points like these organizations are. The Federal Government has spent $36.6 billion to end homelessness and the number of homeless people has only skyrocketed. So that issue is not being solved by just throwing

money at the problem. We need to show accountability here. And the way that these programs and these nonprofits have done it in faith-based is a great way and example to do that. So I really encourage you to look into that and keep on partnering with them. Thank you.

Secretary TURNER. Thank you, sir.

Mrs. BICE. The gentleman's time has expired.

The gentleman from New York, Mr. Espaillat, is recognized for 5 minutes. Mr. Espaillat, your mike, I think.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. I think it is on now.

Secretary, I want to ask you some basic questions. Do you consider that there is a homelessness crisis in America?

Secretary TURNER. Yes, sir.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Do you think that there is a housing affordability emergency in America?

Secretary TURNER. I do.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Secretary, is the rent too damn high in Washington, D.C.?

Secretary TURNER. I believe it is high in a lot of places, sir.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. So there is a homelessness crisis, there is an affordable housing emergency, and the rent is too damn high in many places across America. And so, what does HUD do? What does this administration propose? A 51 percent cut on basic services for housing.

Now, building housing is not a cheap endeavor. It is a deep-pocket challenge anywhere in America. It is not cheap to build housing. It costs money. And so, you are cutting 51 percent of the budget while you recognize that there is a homelessness crisis, there is an affordable housing emergency, and the rent is too damn high in America.

Now, I represent the district that has probably the biggest concentration of NYCHA apartments, that is the New York City Housing Authority apartments, in the city. Now there is 570,000 people live in the city of New York under NYCHA.

Now, you were born in Richardson, Texas. That town has 119,000 people. So NYCHA is five times the size of the city that you were born in. And they have a $78 billion deficit, a deep hole for capital needs: boilers, roof work, pointing work, faulty elevators, flooding, mold in the apartments, lead paint in the apartment. These are the conditions in NYCHA, a $78 billion hole for capital needs, and you are cutting the budget 51 percent. Now I know that you are familiar——

Secretary TURNER. Sir, can I add—can I ask something?

Mr. ESPAILLAT. I will ask you a question in a minute.

Secretary TURNER. Okay, good. Thank you.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. I know that you are familiar with some football terms. You said so in your testimony. So I am going to just highlight some of the cuts: $27.2 billion or 40 percent cut to rental and homeless assistance program. To me that sounds like roughing the passer. A $2.2 billion or 71 percent cut to housing construction, supply, and preservation. That sounds to me like pass interference. A $3.4 billion or 100 percent cut to economic development programs. To me that sounds very much like a delay of game. A $254

million or 100 percent cut to self-sufficiency and pathways to home ownership programs. That is seems that it is a false start.

Mr. Secretary, you have engaged in personal foul on the American people. These cuts are severe and they are going to exacerbate the homeless crisis. They are going to further throw into crisis the affordable housing emergency and the rent is going to continue to be too damn high. You are cutting 51 percent of the budget. Housing is an expensive endeavor. It is no longer a cheap endeavor anywhere in America. Anywhere in the world it is a deep pocket issue and people are sleeping on the street. And you are doing these cuts so that you can give money to people that sleep in mansions, that sleep in Fifth Avenue multimillion dollar condos, that have lakeside houses and beachfront properties. That is what you are doing.

You are not doing God's work. That is not God's work. Fifty-one percent cut, that is devastating. That is a personal foul, Mr. Chairman—Madam Chair. And I yield back. I reclaim my time.

Mrs. BICE. The referee may have to call a timeout moving forward.

Secretary TURNER. Ma'am, can I answer? Can I answer this?

Mrs. BICE. The gentleman has yielded his time.

The gentleman from Ohio, Mr. Joyce, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JOYCE. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Good morning. I am sorry I was at another hearing, but I am trying to, like the chairman, I am trying to work between two of them.

Secretary Turner, I recognize the administration's efforts to make tough but thoughtful budget decisions aimed at promoting efficiency and accountability across Federal programs. I also appreciate HUD's critical role in long-term disaster recovery and their partnership with other agencies in helping communities transition from emergency response to sustainable rebuilding.

As you are aware, both FEMA and HUD specifically work in tandem to assist communities in recovering and rebuilding after natural disasters: FEMA by providing temporary housing, and HUD by facilitating the transition to permanent housing solutions. In light of the proposed changes to the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery program and the fiscal year 2026 budget, how does HUD plan to uphold its mission in this space, particularly as it relates to supporting disaster affected families and communities?

Further, could you share how HUD's plans to maintain its critical role in ensuring disaster survivors are successfully transitioned from costly temporary FEMA housing into more stable long-term housing solutions, even with the proposed reductions?

Secretary TURNER. Yes, sir. And thank you, Congressman. Great to meet you.

You know, HUD is very focused on our critical mission. We are very focused on disaster recovery, we are focused on housing, we are focused on homelessness. And that has not been lost on us. We understand that this is a different way of the distribution of the funds. This is a different paradigm that we are speaking about in the budget that the President and myself are proposing today. We will not allow disaster recovery and those that need assistance in disaster recovery to be lost on us. Working with the states, working with our nonprofits, working with the faith-based organizations,

and obviously, sir, you and your colleagues on the committee, it is not that it will be lost, it is just that it is a different way of distributing these funds. And sir, we believe that this will help us to more effectively and efficiently serve those that are in need in our country.

Mr. JOYCE. Thank you, sir. It was a great answer, but it didn't demonstrate a plan.

Secretary TURNER. Yes, sir.

Mr. JOYCE. Do you have a plan?

Secretary TURNER. Yes. And so in the budget, there is money in our budget to make sure that HUD works with states to develop these strategies and develop a plan. The conversations have begun. And so we do recognize that it is a new way of doing it. We are focused on making sure that the strategy is not just implemented but executed in every state and working with this committee and with states and stakeholders in those states. The money is in our budget to do so. And so that plan has begun and is forthcoming. And I do, I look forward to your input and how we can best do this new strategy.

Mr. JOYCE. One thing I know is you are right, disasters come. All over the country disasters come and you need to be ready for them.

Secretary, the administration has highlighted the underutilized lands as one of the strategies to deliver on the promise of more affordable housing, including ongoing coordination between HUD and the Department of Interior under Secretary Burgum's leadership. Can you provide an update on how this interagency effort is being implemented and what outcomes HUD anticipates in terms of expanding access to affordable housing?

Secretary TURNER. Yes, sir. So Secretary Burgum and I, we signed an MOU, as you have stated, to create a joint task force to identify underutilized Federal lands around our country. Department of Interior has about 500 million acres that are available to be used to build affordable housing, workforce housing, all types of housing around our country. And so HUD's priority in this is to identify where housing is needed. DOI, their priority is to identify the lands that can be used and then work with local states and stakeholders to say what type of housing is needed in this particular area.

So I just—Secretary Burgum and I were in Nevada meeting with the governor and stakeholders there as it pertains to affordable housing in that state and working with the leadership there, with BLM and others. And so, sir, we are well underway on the task force. There is much work to be done, but the identification of the land and identification of the housing needs is underway. And so we look forward to working with states and localities on this strategy.

Mr. JOYCE. Can you elaborate where in your 2026 budget you request the department intends to leverage support for that effort, in particular as it relates to infrastructure planning or technical assistance needed to make these underutilized lands viable?

Secretary TURNER. Yes, sir. And so that is why a joint partnership with DOI will come in from HUD's budget, obviously, and from DOI, but also technical assistance. HUD still has technical as-

sistance where we can help with these development of housing and how we implement this around the country as we move forward.

Mr. JOYCE. Thank you, sir.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I yield back.

Mrs. BICE. The chair recognizes the ranking member of the full committee, Ms. DeLauro, for 5 minutes.

Ms. DELAURO. Thank you so much, Madam Chair. I just would like to follow up for one second with my colleague.

This is the Appropriations Committee. We deal in amounts of money. A program, what is the amount, what is it going to do, how is it going to accomplish that? So far we can't seem to get any information about budget detail, about what it is you all are doing. It is a lot of great words, but what are dollars and cents?

So I think you just have to keep in mind that we appropriate money based on needs and what the programs are, and then we make a decision as to whether or not we ought to be doing that or not. So please get us information on the plan, the dollar amount, what you plan to do.

Listen, your budget request, quite honestly, unleashes a catastrophe of evictions, homelessness at an unbelievable scale. Three-quarters of a million of Americans experience homeless on any given night. Cost of housing is out of control. Middle-class families, working families are being suffocated. Folks in this country today work paycheck to paycheck, one emergency or layoff from financial ruin. Yet your budget eliminates critical lifelines that keep that help to keep a roof over most people's heads in this Nation.

Let me just say with regard to a question here, we have Ansonia, Connecticut, which I represent. Housing authority is smaller, public housing authority. They want to expand programs, services especially for seniors. Residents have lived in this Naugatuck Valley their whole lives. They don't have income to sustain their homes, but they lack affordable housing options. Based on recent National data, it is becoming clear that homelessness among seniors is rising. Some experts expect the trend will continue. People over age 50 used to make up 10 percent of the homeless population. Now it is close to half, a particularly vulnerable population with its own set of challenges.

Over 2 million seniors rely on Federal rental assistance to age in place. You are cutting HUD rental assistance by 43 percent. You propose to eliminate dedicated Section 202 housing for the elderly program, pushing more responsibility to states. Everyone on this committee knows the states don't have the wherewithal to be able to do this. There is no assessment of whether or not they have the capacity to manage.

You propose completely upending homelessness programs. You are shifting to short-and medium-term assistance with no funding for the type of permanent supportive housing that could chronically homeless people with age-related infirmities need to achieve. We have a program in my district in Connecticut. It is called—it is a senior housing program called the Towers. And you have frozen their grant and not giving them the opportunity to deal with critical renovations to a 55-year-old building.

Given housing affordability, homelessness crisis facing our seniors who already live on a fixed income, how are you justifying

eliminating dedicated programs that support housing developments with onsite supportive services tailored to seniors' needs?

Secretary TURNER. Yes, ma'am. Madam DeLauro, so great to meet you, ma'am. And as I said in my opening statement, with this new budget proposal under the President's leadership, this will help us to more effectively serve——

Ms. DELAURO. How?

Secretary TURNER [continuing]. The most vulnerable——

Ms. DELAURO. How?

Secretary TURNER [continuing]. Effectively serve——

Ms. DELAURO. How?

Secretary TURNER [continuing]. Elderly and disabled.

Ms. DELAURO. Answer my question.

Secretary TURNER. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. DELAURO. How? What is the way in which you are going to deal and justify eliminating dedicated programs that support onsite supportive services tailored to seniors' needs? How are you doing that?

Secretary TURNER. Working with the states, ma'am. And when I say working with the states, if I may, states understand their unique needs as it pertains to the elderly, as pertains to the disabled——

Ms. DELAURO. What is the program that will address that?

Secretary TURNER [continuing]. As it pertains to the most vulnerable.

Ms. DELAURO. What is the amount of money that is going to be required to do this? What portion of it will be Federal? What portion will be state? What is the program?

Secretary TURNER. Well, as you said, ma'am, you all are appropriators. You control the purse strings. My job is to maximize the budget that you do give me. And with maximize this budget, we will work with the states to identify, if you will, maam, where those needs are.

Ms. DELAURO. You can't have a budget, with all due respect——

Secretary TURNER. Thank you, ma'am.

Ms. DELAURO [continuing]. You cannot have a budget that doesn't have any numbers, that doesn't have any programmatic direction——

Secretary TURNER. Ma'am, you have the budget in front of you.

Ms. DELAURO [continuing]. That doesn't tell us what we are doing. But what is this specific program on seniors? What are you doing? You are eliminating elderly housing, Section 202, which has been in place for years. I worked for a city many years ago and it was Section 202 in which we worked with providers to do this.

You know, my time has run out. But no, zero. Zero programmatic information, zero details on the budget.

Secretary TURNER. Ma'am, status quo is done.

Mrs. BICE. The ranking member is——

Secretary TURNER. We will do it a different way.

Ms. DELAURO. I would like to ask unanimous consent to put my opening statement into the record because I couldn't be here.

Mrs. BICE. Without objection.

[The information follows:]

REMARKS OF THE HON. ROSA L. DELAURO
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT, & RELATED AGENCIES
BUDGET HEARING – DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT
JUNE 10, 2025

Thank you, Chairman Womack and Ranking Member Clyburn, for holding this hearing on the Trump Administration's budget request for the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Secretary Turner, I welcome you to the House of Representatives. Thank you for appearing before the committee today.

However, I cannot thank you for your budget request, which would unleash a catastrophe of evictions and homelessness at an unbelievable scale on the American people.

Already, three quarters of a million Americans experience homelessness on any given night, and the cost of housing is out of control, suffocating middle class and working American families. Americans are working paycheck to paycheck, one emergency or layoff away from financial ruin, yet your budget eliminates critical lifelines that help keep a roof over the most vulnerable Americans' heads.

But before I get into how your budget would throw more than a million Americans out onto the streets, I want to talk about what is happening right now.

The American people demand help with the cost of living. Rents have skyrocketed far faster than wages. The cost to purchase a home has made the American dream an American fantasy for middle class and working families. But President Trump is not laser focused on the cost-of-living crisis – he is actually making it worse. He promised to fight for workers and the middle class, but instead put billionaires like Elon Musk in charge of the government.

This Administration and Republicans in Congress are attacking programs and services that help Americans afford a place to live in order to hand tax breaks to billionaires. We need the government to fight for the middle class, the working class, and the vulnerable. We have an Administration doing the opposite.

This Administration is recklessly, and unlawfully, freezing and stealing funds from grants and programs within your Department that fight housing discrimination, prevent homelessness, and protect low-income families – abandoning and stealing from the most vulnerable Americans.

You illegally cancelled contracts to help small developers in rural and Tribal communities get people off the streets and into stable housing. You also terminated grants for non-profits to fight the scourge of housing discrimination, meaning many Americans, including people with disabilities, will go without safe and sufficient housing. And you have frozen funding for a program that helps make senior and family housing more energy efficient and resilient from natural disasters – increasing energy costs and endangering American seniors and families.

In my district, you have frozen a grant awarded to The Towers, a nonprofit that provides housing for Jewish seniors in need of support and care, preventing critical renovations for the 55-year-old building.

Keeping people housed, fighting housing discrimination, and ensuring the safety of our communities is not waste, fraud, or abuse. These are lifelines that help keep Americans from living on the streets.

Turning to your budget, I am frankly appalled by the destruction you propose of our housing safety net, and I am horrified of the consequences for my constituents and for Americans across the country.

Your budget cuts nearly $46 billion from successful programs that make housing more accessible for vulnerable Americans, and replaces them with block grants, for which you have provided no detail as to how they will be administered.

To claim that state and local governments will pick up the slack is a complete fiction. No one here believes their state can cover the difference of funds they collect through the programs you seek to cut.

You completely eliminate Section 8 Rental Assistance for the 3.5 million working and low-income households that depend on the program to keep a roof over their heads.

You completely eliminate the Community Development Block Grant, which over a thousand state and local governments use to address critical infrastructure needs and public improvements, including drinking- and waste-water projects.

You completely eliminate the sole federal program dedicated to affordable housing construction. 45,000 affordable housing units are slated to be produced next year with these funds. That is 45,000 families who will not have a place to live under your budget.

I thought we shared the goal of helping more people to move off assistance, yet you eliminate grants for public housing agencies to help residents achieve self-sufficiency and economic independence.

Also eliminated: grants to reduce barriers to new housing construction, grants for addressing lead, mold, and other environmental hazards, and grants for fair housing investigations.

Your budget will put adequate, safe housing out of reach for millions of American households.

This Administration claims to support manufacturing and construction, yet while materials get more expensive because of the President's trade wars, you are removing the investments that help more housing get built.

This Administration claims to be lowering costs, yet you are putting affordable housing even more out of reach.

Mr. Secretary, this budget is a pro-eviction, pro-homelessness platform. The American people cannot afford to meet their basic needs, and they cannot afford your budget that will kick them to the streets.

I thank the Chair, and I look forward to your testimony.

Ms. DELAURO. Thank you.

Mrs. BICE. I now recognize myself for 5 minutes.

Secretary TURNER. Yes, ma'am.

Mrs. BICE. Mr. Secretary, first let me start out by saying there is a famous quote that I think all of us here know well, and that is the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and over and expecting a different outcome. And based on your opening statement, you are looking to do something different. You are looking to try to find a different path to make sure that we are addressing homelessness in our country.

Mr. Secretary, when were you confirmed?

Secretary TURNER. February the 5th.

Mrs. BICE. So we are talking about 120-plus days ago. Is that correct?

Secretary TURNER. Yes.

Mrs. BICE. Is it safe to say that you have a framework for a plan that you want to move forward, but maybe not all of the nuts and bolts that you need to be able to present that—those details today?

Secretary TURNER. Indeed, the framework is there and we are working on the nuts and bolts. Yes, ma'am.

Mrs. BICE. I want to give you the opportunity to address some of the concerns that have been raised here today. But I also want to bring up one other point, and that is I was surprised to find out that there are approximately 3,000 public housing authorities across the country. Do you feel like that those housing authorities are working efficiently for HUD?

Secretary TURNER. No, ma'am. And we do have over 3,000 public housing authorities around our country, many of which are not operating appropriately, some are. I have traveled extensively in just 120 days that I have been in this assignment around our country and visited public housing authorities.

I was just at NYCHA to address the congressman who was asking me about NYCHA. NYCHA is $200 million in arrears and that is with a $2.3 billion appropriation from the appropriators, $2.3 billion in fiscal year 2024. And yet they are $200 million in arrears. They have 250,000 people on the waiting list.

Just while I was there last Wednesday, a 21-year-old was shot in the neck and killed at a public barbecue. And no arrest has been made. So, tell me, how are the residents there safe? They are living in deplorable conditions. It is not safe. The New York NYPD is not responding the way they should. And so that is just one example of a public housing authority not being efficient, but yet we want to continue the status quo.

I am not interested in doing business as usual. The President is not interested. And so, the answer is, this is a new culture. It is a new paradigm.

And another housing authority that I visit, the residents were even afraid to tell me what was going on in fear of repercussions by the board of directors there. There was one lady there that has been living there since 1973. That means she has been living there her entire life. Her mother, her, and now her children, three generational, multiple generations living in public housing authority. That is not what it is meant for. It is meant for temporary as-

sistance, but then to be raised out of public assistance to a life of self-sustainability.

And so no, ma'am, public housing authorities as a whole are not operating efficiently.

Mrs. BICE. The budget proposes charging—I am sorry, changing five programs into a singular block grant program. It is been mentioned earlier, called the State Rental Assistance Program. How can we trust that states with governors, including Gavin Newsom, who spent $18.5 billion on affordable housing in the past year, or 42.5 percent of HUD's fiscal year 2026 budget request, will use the block grant funding appropriately? Because they clearly have not been successful in addressing the homelessness issue.

Secretary TURNER. Yes, ma'am. And that is a great question and it is what I think we should talk about, because, you know, this is a new shift, and we have to work with the appropriate leaders in the appropriate states. And some states, as you know, ma'am, are better than others. Leadership in some states is greater than others. We see right now what is going on in L.A., you know, with the agitators and the riots and the attack on our law enforcement. And so, you know, California is not a good example of proper leadership, but there are many around our country that do have proper leadership. And so I am looking forward to working with them as they implement, you know, the funding and distribute it appropriately to take care of the needs in their particular state.

Mrs. BICE. Mr. Secretary, let me wrap up by saying, first of all, we appreciate you being here today. Homelessness is an issue. It is an issue across this country, and we want to make sure that your organization is addressing it in a thoughtful, responsible way. Certainly, you have heard today from members of this committee the concerns around foster children aging out of the system, veterans' homelessness, which is something that I am passionate about as a member of the MilCon-VA Subcommittee as well on Appropriations.

So we all look forward to working with you to make sure that we are using taxpayer dollars judiciously, wisely, but also trying to find solutions to the problems that we face as it relates to homelessness.

With that, my time has now expired.

Mr. QUIGLEY. Madam Chair?

Mrs. BICE. And at this——

Mr. QUIGLEY. I know we are going to——

Mrs. BICE. For what purpose does the gentleman seek recognition?

Mr. QUIGLEY. I really appreciate that. I thought we were going to have a second round. Just ask unanimous consent to submit for the record four pages of stories from women in Chicago, who are currently using these vouchers to keep themselves and their children safe.

Mrs. BICE. Without objection——

[The information follows:]

Chicago Area – EHV Testimonies – May 15, 2025

The Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) program has provided life-saving assistance to more than 70,000 households experiencing or at risk of homelessness and fleeing domestic violence. Illinois received 1,808 EHVs. However, funding for the EHV program is insufficient to cover the continued cost of assistance, putting this vital program at risk of ending, and the over 59,000 households who rely on an EHV at immediate risk of returning to homelessness.

This funding cliff also comes as the Trump Administration proposes cutting funding for vouchers and other rental assistance programs by 43% in the coming federal budget.

Housing vouchers are a proven, evidence-based tool that helps over 5.2 million people with low incomes afford a safe, stable, accessible home.

The following are stories submitted by homeless service providers in DuPage County, suburban Cook County, and Chicago. All stories include pseudonyms. Please feel free to share however helpful to advocate for the continuation of Emergency Housing Vouchers.

Jen: Jen was the mother of an 8-year-old when she was able to move out of our shelter program and into an apartment of her own with an EHV. She has a medical condition, so it was very hard for her to work in an office. An EHV not only gave her an apartment with a kitchen, and a room for her son to sleep in, and a space of her own, but it also allowed her to have a resource to get a remote job. Now, she is employed, working from a decent apartment with the supplement that comes from her voucher, and her son can do his homework and learn and grow in his own space, making him less likely to be homeless as an adult. Without a voucher, Jen will most likely lose her apartment. She'll either have to find something cheaper that matches her income, or she'll become homeless.

Teresa: Teresa is the mother of 6 children. When she got her EHV, she was pregnant. I want to note something important in Teresa's circumstances: As an abuse victim, her body was not her own for years when living with her abuser, and she now has many children that she is responsible for. She came to Pads because when she was staying with a friend, her abuser would come knocking on their door, and she needed a safe space away from him. Without a voucher, with such a large family, they have a high probability of becoming homeless and coming back to shelter. This would be devastating for her children who are now in school in a stable environment, and wouldn't want to lose their home or their neighborhood where they have friends.

Sarah: Sarah was in shelter and able to move into her own unit with the assistance of CCSS. During her time in RRH, the client had minimal income and no support from the children's father. The client was able to increase her income, however unable to maintain full market rent at the time of her graduation from RRH. With the assistance of housing staff, CCSS was able to advocate on the client's behalf to receive EHV, so that the client was able to continue to succeed, and have a safe living environment for her and her two children. Without the assistance of the EHV our clients would not be able to afford to

sustain a permanent living arrangement as many of the individuals are unable to afford Fair Market Rent while continuing to increase their income, especially those with children. Many of the individuals we serve are unable to afford reliable transportation or live in areas where public transportation is not accessible. With the assistance of EHV the individuals are able to maintain her rent, focus on increasing their income through stable income and look forward to a possible purchase of an affordable vehicle.

Sheila: Sheila was referred to Deborah's Place's Expedited Housing Initiative (EHI) Rapid Rehousing Program (RRH) during COVID. As she transitioned into her RRH apartment unit, she was very happy and excited to move from shelter into her 1-bedroom apartment with a time-limited one-year rental subsidy. Everything was going well, and her Case Manager was working with her on adjusting in her apartment and connecting to community resources. One day, the participant contacted her Case Manager and reported that she was in hospital. The participant reported to the Case Manager that her ex-partner broke into the apartment unit, hid in the closet, and burned her unit down. The Case Manager went to visit the participant at the hospital, along with a Domestic Violence Advocate. The Case Manager assisted the participant with getting an Order of Protection and transferring her to a domestic violence shelter. During that time, the Case Manager received information that the participant's application for an Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) had been approved. The Case Manager was excited about this opportunity for participant, but was concerned about security of the building where she would live. The Case Manager wanted her to have a more secure building to live in due to unsafe situation. The Case Manager went to the domestic violence shelter to help the participant complete her EHV move-in briefing with the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA). The participant and Case Manager discussed areas that participant would feel safe residing. The Case Manager and participant submitted Request for Tenancy Approval (RTA) packet to a landlord of an area and building where she felt comfortable. She was approved for a secure building with 24-hour security. The participant is still residing in this safe and secure building. She enjoys her housing and was excited that she is able to remain safely housed here using her 9-year EHV voucher. Were the EHV voucher program to end sooner than the 9 years promised, this participant's safety and life would be at risk, as she would have no choice but to return to the streets. It would also become more difficult for her to maintain the secrecy of her location from her abuser.

June: June was housed through the Expedited Housing Initiative Rapid Re-housing (RRH) program during COVID. The Rapid Re-housing program provided temporary housing for 12 months. As the participant's 12 months was coming to the end, she didn't qualify for PSH (Permanent Supportive Housing) due to not meeting the chronic homeless requirement. The Emergency Housing Voucher came at a good time because Deborah's Place did not want to transition the participant back into shelter due to lack of affordable housing. The participant worked with her case manager and applied for an Emergency Housing Voucher and was approved. She attended the CHA move-in briefing and obtained Request for Tenancy Approval (RTA) packet and was able to search for housing. The EHV program paid for application fees, move in fees/security deposits. They even paid for movers from her move from her RRH unit to her EHV unit. The participant found housing and utilized all resources available through the EHV

program and transitioned to housing with the expectation of a 9-year voucher. The participant was one of Deborah's Place's first participants to move with the EHV voucher. She is currently in her unit and has not moved. She has adjusted to her new community and enjoys her housing. Because she is extremely low income, (below 30% of AME), she is unable to afford the full-market rent on her unit or on any housing in Chicago without a rental subsidy. Without the EHV voucher, she will return to the streets.

The four narratives described below are survivors of domestic violence, abuse and/or sex and human trafficking. These survivors have endured unspeakable acts of physical violence, rape and sexual abuse. Such traumatic events have long-lasting physical, mental, behavioral and psychological impacts on the survivor and their families. The emergency housing voucher program has provided each of these families with safety, security and most importantly the stability essential to build back their lives.

- **Family 1:** The family of six, fled from their previous residence in fear for their lives and for safety to escape from a violent abusive partner. The family was provided emergency shelter for a few weeks and a housing program while they recovered from traumatic events. The survivor family used their time in the emergency housing voucher program to get through one of the most challenging years of their life, including the loss of close family members, financial difficulties and navigating accessibility challenges in the suburbs. The program provided essential supports such as rental assistance and utilities, along with some financial assistance from other grants, that strengthened the family's capacity to succeed in pursuing educational aspirations of the children and parent, as well as to gain employment.

- **Family 2:** The client along with her small child fled their former place of residence for safety reasons and to escape from years of violence, abuse and housing and financial instability. A history of mental health and posttraumatic stress from the abuse, in addition chronic physical health conditions confounded challenges for this client. Thus, making it difficult to navigate the tasks of daily life, pay bills, afford rent, drive a car or get to work. The emergency housing voucher program not only covered rental assistance, it also provided a safe, stable home environment for this mother and young child for the very first time in their lives.

- **Family 3:** The family of six escaped a life of abuse and fled to IL from a different state to get away from their abuser, of whom they continue to live in fear to this date. The family's multiple moves due to safety reasons meant inconsistent social supports, and limited resources. Thus resulting in academic and developmental impact on the family's adolescents and young teenage children. Through the support of program staff, the family applied and got approved for the emergency housing voucher program. The program supplied the fundamental provision of safety which allowed for stability and a chance for the children to remain in school, and the mother to stay employed.

- **Family 4:** The client and her four young children escaped from years of severe trauma and abuse. Each of the young children had experienced trauma from witnessing abuse firsthand, the adverse impacts on young children are traumatic and long lived. Through the hardest times, the client envisioned a life for herself and her children that would allow them to be able to live a full life with some help. The client is well qualified and experienced in her field of work, however not having a permanent place to live and the burden of affordability of rent, provisions, childcare and other needs of young children, on a single income is extremely challenging. The emergency housing voucher provided this family with permanent, stable, safe housing and an opportunity to build back their lives bit by bit

Domestic Violence Agency Testimony: During Covid we assisted several Anew housing clients with EHV applications who were homeless due to fleeing domestic violence. This was a very beneficial option for us as housing providers, considering many of our clients have disabilities and other barriers that impact their ability to maintain housing independently. Without availability of other housing options, these Emergency Housing Vouchers were pretty much all we had to connect clients with at times.

When working with survivors of domestic violence, a main barrier they face when planning to flee, is having a safe place to go. Many individuals in this situation do not have the financial means to independently secure housing upon leaving and for the most part, DV shelters in the Suburban Cook County area are consistently at capacity. They are also often in a position where it is not safe to stay with friends or family as these are not secure locations, thus putting their loved ones in danger as well. This leaves them with minimal options.

When having the opportunity to provide housing with the EHV's we are then able to safety plan with these individuals on how to keep their family safe while in their situation, while simultaneously working with them on getting housed with an EHV.

Unfortunately, the reality now is that these individuals are put on various waiting lists.... waiting lists for shelters, for housing program opportunities, for section 8. As we know, there are significant challenges with affordable housing in the area and when considering the additional barriers DV survivors face (i.e. Safety concerns, having a means to earn income, credit destroyed by financial abuse, etc.) it is all the more challenging and can put them at greater risk. Individuals homeless due to fleeing domestic violence benefit more from long term support. Many have experienced various types of abuse that not only impact their physical and mental health but also their ability to earn a living wage and gain financial stability. These more long-term housing interventions are crucial for them to be able to work on rebuilding their lives and regaining their independence, which is often a long process.

(4)

Mr. QUIGLEY. Thank you.

Mrs. BICE [continuing]. That will be entered into the record.

And with that, I would like to give the ranking member, Mr. Clyburn, the ability to offer a closing statement. Mr. Clyburn, you are recognized.

Mr. CLYBURN. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for being here.

Secretary TURNER. Yes, sir.

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Secretary, I grew up in a parsonage and when I told my dad that I had decided against going to the seminary, he said to me, well, son, I suspect the world would much rather see a sermon than to hear one. I have never forgotten that. And I try to conduct myself here in such a way that people will see in my work a good, productive sermon.

Now, I have listened to your testimony. I have looked at some comments you have made in the past, especially as it relates to DEI. You said that DEI is inexcusable propaganda. Well, Mr. Secretary, I beg to differ. I grew up in South Carolina. I still live in South Carolina. My parents all are South Carolinians—were South Carolinians. And what you propose today, though, you have been using the word "refocus," refocus means to change directions. What you have been testifying to is retrogression. It means to return to something of former, usually something that is worse. And cutting 51 percent out of a budget will not refocus the budget. It will return to what that budget and those plans were when you had that 51 percent less.

So I would say to you today that when you look at States' rights, I am not going to be concerned about this if you give the right to South Carolina because you are looking at that guy that wrote the South Carolina Fair Housing Law and we implement that law. I ran it. The guy that wrote the South Carolina Bill of Rights for Handicapped Citizens. I was not in the—I have never been in the state legislature, so I know how to manage stuff. That is all I have ever been in. And the budget you are proposing, you cannot possibly meet the needs of the American people with that budget.

We all talk about race and sex discrimination. But the big problem, if you look at all of the protected classes in housing, you know which one gets the most discrimination? The disabled. The disabled. And that is sinful for us to sit here and cut the budget for the disabled.

I want to close with this. I represent North Charleston. According to the Princeton study, North Charleston led the Nation in evictions. I represent Columbia, South Carolina, and I live in Columbia, number six in evictions. There is something those two communities got in common that I want you to focus on and I want this committee to think about. Those two, Fort Jackson is in Columbia, the Charleston Air Force Base in North Charleston. The communities that house most of our servicemen and -women are leading the Nation in evictions.

During the coronavirus, I led the investigation into these evictions. Servicemen and -women, people serving abroad while their children and spouses are back home getting evicted, and here we are cutting the money to address those needs.

Mr. Secretary, I look forward to playing a round of golf with you so that we can really discuss this when we have more time. So I will close.

Secretary TURNER. Thank you. Thank you, sir.

Mr. CLYBURN. If I may, Madam Vice Chair, I once read the story of a man who played at a country club and he came upon the hole and there was a pond between him and the green. And he turned to his caddy, he said, Caddy, what do the members of this club use when they are faced with this shot? And the caddy says, well, most of them use a six iron for this. So he pulled out of the six iron, addressed the ball, hit it perfectly in the water. The ball fell in the water. He turned to his caddy and said, Caddy, I thought you said that most of the people playing from this point use a six iron. He said, most of them do. Well, I will just hit this six iron about as sweet as I could hit it and the ball is in the water. Most of them do.

So we have to learn, we can't follow what most people do. What we have to do is size up the situation, think about your capabilities, and then address the ball. Use the right equipment and we might get to the green. Don't do what most of them do.

I yield back.

Mrs. BICE. Thank you, Ranking Member Clyburn.

Secretary TURNER. Thank you, sir.

Mrs. BICE. And we have had a lot of sports analogies today. We talked about baseball, University of Arkansas, we talked football, we talked golf. We did not talk about Thunder basketball, so I feel obligated as the Member from Oklahoma representing the Oklahoma City Thunder to give a plug to them.

So, Mr. Secretary, we appreciate your time today. Thank you for this robust conversation. We look forward, as I mentioned, to working with you in the future to make sure that we are addressing the homeless population across this country.

And with that, we are adjourned.

Secretary TURNER. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 11:34 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

Scott Turner, Secretary
Budget Hearing – Department of Housing and Urban Development
[Chairman Steve Womack]
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations

Deadline for Submission: Wednesday, June 17, 2025, at 5 PM EST

Homelessness

Questions:

- In FY24, over 26,000 households received long-term assistance through the HOPWA program, and about 200,000 individuals received long-term housing through the homeless continuum of care program. What will happen to those who are in this long-term housing under your proposal?

  RESPONSE: Individuals and families in long-term housing through HOPWA and the CoC program deserve the opportunity to recover and regain independence and economic freedom. The President's proposed budget invests $4 billion into a consolidated Emergency Solutions Grants block grant program, with the goal of giving Americans the resources to move from homelessness or housing insecurity to stability and self-sufficiency. This policy shift is grounded in the need for a streamlined and balanced pathway of services —from outreach, to emergency shelter, to transitional housing programs and stabilization —with the goal of reducing homelessness. It reflects a move toward a more agile approach that emphasizes self-sufficiency, rapid stabilization, and emergency, short- and medium-term housing solutions over long-term service dependency. This approach provides local governments with increased flexibility to serve their most vulnerable communities in the ways they know best. Alongside housing assistance available through the state rental assistance program and health resources — including HIV/AIDS resources — available through HHS, HUD is committed to serving the most vulnerable Americans.

- Can you elaborate on what your formula would look like, since your request notes that it will be decided by the Secretary? Could it have the unintended impact of picking winners and losers in the fight against homelessness?

  RESPONSE: The existing ESG formula will be updated at the direction of the Secretary. While the exact formula adjustments have yet to be determined, the intent of an updated ESG formula is to ensure the fair distribution of significantly increased resources to state and local governments by taking into account many factors including need and the recipient's capacity to effectively use them. HUD will

make adjustments to the weighting of factors or account for an additional datasets, as needed.

Improper payments in TBRA and PBRA:

Questions:

- When does HUD anticipate that it will be able to complete and report a compliance estimate for improper payments in the TBRA and PBRA programs?

  RESPONSE: Since the start of this Administration, HUD has been committed to thoroughly assessing the complexities of these high-risk programs. These programs, which serve over 3.7 million low-income families, involve a decentralized network of over 2,000 Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) and over 50 Performance-Based Contract Administrators (PBCAs), each with unique processes and systems for processing monthly payments and verifying program compliance.

  To remediate long-standing issues with payment integrity, HUD is creating a robust intra-agency framework that will guide payment integrity efforts moving forward, which will require improvements to all aspects of our program oversight: people, process, and technology. We anticipate having a comprehensive strategy in place in FY 2026.

- Have you worked with public housing agencies and other housing providers on improper payments? How do you plan to work with them to tamp down on improper payments?

  RESPONSE: HUD provides PHAs and contract administrators with extensive handbooks and training guides on program requirements and has conducted on-site and remote testing of their payment processes and controls.

  Given the decentralized network of PHAs and PBCAs, HUD recognizes that the inherent risks associated with many HUD programs require additional data and coordination with our stakeholders, including PHAs. As part of HUD's payment integrity strategy, HUD is working to ensure we have the necessary data to conduct compliance and oversight activities, as required by statute. We are taking a comprehensive review of control deficiencies in validating data inputs, data processing and IT system reconciliations. This includes, for the first time, collecting sub-recipient data to track the complete flow of federal funds throughout our program's lifecycles so we can monitor expenditures on a real time basis.

- Are there additional authorities or investments, in IT systems or otherwise, that would help HUD end improper payments?

  RESPONSE: We appreciate the question and look forward to working with Congress to support HUD in ending improper payments. Within the resources requested in HUD's FY2026 President's Budget, additional flexibilities would help

HUD assess the efficacy of and develop new business process initiatives to address payment integrity, with a primary focus on HUD's rental assistance programs and subrecipient data from the grant disbursements. Presently, HUD uses different systems to determine enrollee and recipient eligibility (such as a PHA), and a third system for payment. This initiative will focus on tracking HUD funds throughout the program lifecycle, linking program rules, recipient eligibility, and payment. This initiative will require business process mapping and redesign, personnel training, systems development, and IT solutions that link eligibility systems to payment systems.

CDBG-DR:

Questions:

- Can you provide an update on the disbursement of funds for the 48 disasters covered under the most recent supplemental?

  RESPONSE: To access recovery and mitigation funding, eligible states and localities must have an approved action plan proposing uses for their respective funding allocation and have signed a grant agreement with HUD.

  Of the grantees for which disaster relief has been appropriated in Public Law 118-158 for the disasters in 2023 and 2024, as of July 11, 2025, 16 action plans have been approved, representing $6,905,153,000 in funding, and 10 are pending approval, representing $2,463,302,000 in funding. Of the states and localities whose action plans have been approved, 8 have signed grant agreements, representing $3,067,382,000 in funding.

  More generally, CDBG-DR grants are set up on a cost reimbursement basis. Disbursements are made through HUD's financial system.

- Can you discuss the impact of how rounds 1 and 2 of the Deferred Resignation Program have impacted both field offices and the headquarters staff for the Office of Community Planning and Development? How does HUD plan to ensure there is sufficient staffing for disaster recovery efforts, for both past and future disasters?

  RESPONSE: Over 330 CPD staff voluntarily opted into the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP) across headquarters and the field. About 53% of these participants are in the Field and the rest are from various headquarters offices including 19 employees in the Office of Disaster Recovery. CPD is actively reviewing its staffing capacity and ensuring critical functions continue to operate. CPD is committed to continuing its engagement with state, local, and other grantees that have experienced a disaster.

HOME-ARP:

Questions:

- Have you identified any ways to administratively speed up the expenditure of HOME-American Rescue Plan funds, regulatorily? I am especially interested in streamlining NEPA requirements, as the President raised in his Executive Order entitled "Unleashing American Energy."

  RESPONSE: HOME-ARP funds may be used for (1) development and support of affordable rental housing, (2) tenant-based rental assistance (TBRA), (3) provision of supportive services, and (4) acquisition and development of non-congregate shelter units. As of June 23, 2025, 17 percent of the funds appropriated for HOME-ARP formula allocations have been expended. Additionally, 34 percent of HOME-ARP funds have been committed to projects. These percentages continue to increase as participating jurisdictions continue to implement their local programs. These same percentages were 5 percent and 16 percent, respectively at the end of June 2024. HOME-ARP funds remain available to expend until September 30, 2030.

  The American Rescue Plan provided HUD authority to suspend statutory requirements in implementing HOME-ARP, which the Department did in the HOME-ARP notice to ease the administrative burden of the program and facilitate the use of funds. However, that waiver authority excluded statutory requirements related to the environment. As such, HOME-ARP TBRA and Supportive Services activities are exempt or categorically excluded from environmental review requirements, while rental housing development and the development of non-congregate shelter units require environmental reviews under HUD's regulations. Like in the HOME program, environmental reviews are administered by the same participating jurisdictions who typically serve as the responsible entities for environmental reviews.

  Further, pursuant to Executive Order 14154 issued January 20, 2025, on Unleashing American Energy, HUD is currently undertaking rulemaking on its environmental regulations at 24 CFR parts 50 and 58. The proposed streamlining measures included in this rulemaking effort may help facilitate environmental reviews for certain HOME-ARP development projects.

- Have you identified any ways that Congress could help?

  RESPONSE: HUD would support any effort by Congress to streamline NEPA requirements in line with the President's Executive Order on "Unleashing American Energy" issued on January 20, 2025.

Scott Turner, Secretary
Budget Hearing – Department of Housing and Urban Development
[Congresswoman Stephanie Bice]
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations

Deadline for Submission: Wednesday, June 17, 2025, at 5 PM EST

Question Subject Area
Question Background:

In May 2018, President Donald J. Trump signed the Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act into law. Section 310 of that law (Public Law 115-174) requiring the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) to create a pathway for competition in the credit scoring models used by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac ("the Enterprises").

Following a lengthy review, the FHFA announced in October 2022 that it had validated and approved new, more advanced credit scoring models, including VantageScore 4.0 and FICO 10T, for use by the Enterprises.

Question:

1. As this implementation is finalized for the conventional market, how is the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), under your leadership, working to ensure its own underwriting systems are also upgraded to incorporate modern credit scoring models that use alternative, verified payment data (rent, utilities, etc.) and trended credit data?

   RESPONSE: Our teams are currently conducting analysis to evaluate the potential impact of such modern credit scoring methodologies on borrowers seeking FHA-insured mortgages and the Mutual Mortgage Insurance Fund (MMIF), which will be used to inform our strategy for implementation. We are in contact with our interagency partners, including the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA), and are approaching our analysis both from the perspective of what is best for FHA borrowers as well as from the viewpoint of FHA's role as a key participant in the larger mortgage finance system.

2. Are there existing roadblocks—technical, regulatory, or legislative—that are preventing FHA from adopting modern credit scoring models, and what steps is the Department taking to overcome them?

   RESPONSE: We don't anticipate regulatory or legislative roadblocks; however, our teams are carefully working through the necessary infrastructure, resources, and support needed to facilitate a successful implementation at the appropriate time. FHA is closely monitoring FHFA's timelines for adoption.

Scott Turner, Secretary
Budget Hearing – Department of Housing and Urban Development
Rep. Pete Aguilar
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations

Rebuilding Southern California Following the January Fires

As Rep. Torres discussed, Southern California experienced horrific wildfires in January. The fires destroyed over 11,000 homes that are estimated to cost over $30 billion in property damages.

During your visit to Southern California in March, you announced that HUD would be extending FHA foreclosure relief for families impacted by the wildfires until July 7.

> Question 1: Does HUD plan to further extend this relief to support Southern California after these devastating fires?
>
> **RESPONSE: HUD has already extended the foreclosure moratorium for homeowners impacted by the wildfires in southern California earlier this year. HUD believes this has provided sufficient time for homeowners to file insurance claims where possible, make repairs that are necessary, and resume making payments on their mortgage.**

President Trump and officials in his Administration have threatened to place conditions on any disaster relief for Southern California. However, as Rep. Torres mentioned, President Trump has still not requested any supplemental funding to support California.

> Question 2: Is HUD willing to work with Congress to support families impacted by the Southern California fires?

It has been five months since the California fires started without the Trump Administration requesting disaster supplemental funding, and Congress has never placed conditions on disaster funding in the past. We hope you are willing to work with us to ensure Southern California receives the support it needs without conditions on disaster assistance.

RESPONSE: HUD has been and continues to be committed to supporting states that experience disasters. Through its ongoing engagement, HUD continues to support families impacted by the Southern California wildfires by providing both funding and regulatory relief.

To date, the administration has directed Rapid Unsheltered Survivor Housing (RUSH) funding to several states this year, including seven grantees in California in response to the Los Angeles wildfires and straight-line winds. Specifically, the State of California and six Los Angeles area local governments were awarded a total of $8,409,957 in RUSH funds to

address the needs of individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and have needs not otherwise served or fully met by existing Federal disaster relief programs.

Table for reference below:

RUSH Allocation	Grantee
$3,000,000	State of California
$1,000,000	Los Angeles County
$1,000,000	City of Los Angeles
$1,000,000	City of Pasadena
$1,000,000	City of Pomona
$1,000,000	City of Long Beach
$409,957	City of Glendale

In addition, HUD has recently processed an expedited waiver for the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) to provide regulatory relief to better assist families displaced by the disaster. This waiver allows the Public Housing Agency (PHA) to pause implementation of Small Area Fair Market Rents (SAFMR) and continue use of a hybrid payment standard model.

HUD will continue to engage with Southern California partners to ensure that the families impacted by the wildfires continue to be supported throughout their recovery.

Homeowners' Insurance Crisis

Wildfires used to occur during a "season," but now due to environmental factors, wildfires threaten California families' year round. As a result, seven of the top 12 insurance companies have ended existing homeowners' insurance policies or stopped providing new policies to California homeowners since 2022.

One of the main challenges that California is going to face in the rebuilding process is the amount of homes destroyed that were underinsured or lost their fire coverage.

Question 1: Within HUD's jurisdiction, how will HUD work with Congress to address this homeowners' insurance crisis nationwide that has been caused by climate disasters?

RESPONSE: HUD has limited ability to directly address increasing insurance costs or lack of insurance availability, however, HUD will work with our partners across the federal government, in Congress, and in state and local governments to assist multi-family property owners and homeowners in accessing the insurance products they need to protect their property.

Question 2: How can HUD best support states like California and Florida in their rebuilding process after disasters in regions that the insurance companies are fleeing?

RESPONSE: As stated above, HUD has limited ability to directly address increasing insurance costs or lack of insurance availability. HUD supports ongoing discussions about empowering and supporting communities and states so they can build or rebuild their future.

President Budget Request's Elimination of Funding for Supportive Services

Mr. Secretary, in your testimony, you highlight how HUD assistance is supposed to be "temporary," not "permanent."

However, in the Fiscal Year 2026 HUD Budget Request, you requested eliminating the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program. This program funds over 1,600 service coordinator jobs who provide services to 136,000 families nationwide to help them achieve economic independence.

Question 1: How do you anticipate the elimination of the Family Self-Sufficiency Program will impact the number of families trying to move out of HUD-assisted housing?

RESPONSE: Recent evaluations of the Family Self-Sufficiency Program found that the program struggles to achieve its stated outcomes. The Budget proposes a paradigm shift away from the continuation of duplicative government programs that are not achieving their purpose. HUD's State Rental Assistance Program proposal includes transformational program requirements, such as time limits, that will help able-bodied HUD-assisted residents achieve true self-sufficiency. In addition, HUD encourages communities to work with State and local governments, local non-profits, the private sector, and faith-based organizations to incentivize self-sufficiency among HUD-assisted residents according to their specific circumstances.

Question 2: How will HUD fill this funding gap to ensure that families utilizing rental assistance will have access to services that help them achieve economic independence?

I have met with public housing agencies and affordable housing properties, who emphasize the importance of self-sufficiency programs to support families' ability to improve their housing stability. That's why I am reintroducing a bill to codify a program that provides funding to affordable housing properties to provide their residents with supportive services.

I urge you to reconsider the request to eliminate the Family Self-Sufficiency Program.

RESPONSE: I am 100% committed to helping families transition out of HUD-assisted housing and leading the best lives they can. They just need the right tools.

The current rental assistance system that charges residents 30 percent of their household income disincentivizes work and marriage, which are the very things we should be encouraging to help families reach self-sufficiency and economic independence. The self-sufficiency programs you mentioned do not reach all public housing authorities and do little to mitigate this fact.

Our proposed State Rental Assistance Program eliminates this 30 percent tax on raises or marriage for residents and empowers states to create rental assistance programs that will maximize our goal of transitioning people out of assisted housing and helping them achieve economic independence. Bottom line - states need flexibility in how they support their people and communities, not a one size fits all Washington approach.

A key part of our proposal is a common-sense time limit that will encourage able-bodied residents to move up and out of assisted housing to build the lives they desire.

Consolidation of Rental Assistance Programs

I have heard from affordable housing providers that long-term project-based rental assistance is essential to preserving affordable housing because this long-term guarantee helps project owners secure private capital from lenders.

However, the President's Budget Request seeks to consolidate multiple rental assistance programs into one "State Rental Assistance Program."

Question 1: Has the Administration considered how difficult it will be to preserve affordable housing when the Administration is seeking to cut project-based housing choice vouchers and project-based rental assistance?

RESPONSE: States are best positioned to determine how to preserve affordable housing options, including project-based vouchers and other project-based rental assistance.

Question 2: How many existing rental assistance contracts will be affected if HUD consolidates these existing rental assistance programs?

RESPONSE: States will determine how to fund rental assistance programs, including whether to maintain existing contracts.

Question 3: How many residents does the Administration anticipate will be impacted by this transition to a consolidated rental assistance program?

RESPONSE: The current system of rental assistance programs has been dysfunctional for a long time, wasting taxpayer dollars, bailing out over-regulated housing markets with subsidies, and stifling self-sufficiency and economic independence for residents.

When I came to HUD, I committed to taking inventory of our programs and processes to find out what is and isn't working well for taxpayers and those who depend on our programs. It's time to take a different approach - the Washington approach of one size fits all for communities does not work.

What I have found is a rental assistance system full of waste, fraud, and abuse; inefficiencies and bloated administrative costs; deteriorating public housing units; and a rent structure that punishes work and marriage among residents.

What we propose is indeed transformational - a State-based formula grant which would encourage states to have skin in the game for funding and design of their own rental assistance programs based on their unique needs and preferences, without heavy-handed interference from Washington.

Question 4: Does the Administration have a plan to ensure that residents who are currently assisted by these HUD programs do not lose their housing?

RESPONSE: The President's Budget would create a State-based formula grant which would encourage states to have skin in the game for funding and design of their own rental assistance programs based on their unique needs and preferences, without heavy-handed interference from Washington.

The proposal also maintains HUD's commitment to protecting our most vulnerable elderly and disabled citizens. This budget would prioritize rental assistance for these families. At the same time, HUD will also maintain our commitment to promoting self-sufficiency and economic independence by adopting a common-sense time limit that will encourage able-bodied residents to move up and out of assisted housing.

Addressing the Homelessness Crisis

I was disappointed to see that the HUD Skinny Budget seeks to cut about $532 million in funding from programs focused on addressing homelessness.

Specifically, I'm concerned that the President's Budget Request seeks to eliminate the Continuum of Care program, which can fund permanent supportive housing (PSH) and wraparound, individualized services.

Question 1: How do you anticipate these funding cuts to Continuum of Care and other homeless assistance programs will impact the 166,000 people currently in permanent supportive housing units around the nation?

RESPONSE: Individuals and families in Permanent Supportive Housing deserve the opportunity to recover and regain independence and economic freedom. Through the consolidated Emergency Solutions Grant Program, which the President's budget proposes to invest $4 billion into, alongside housing assistance available through the proposed State Rental Assistance Program and health resources available through HHS, HUD is committed to serving the most vulnerable Americans.

Question 2: What are the Administration's plans for helping to end the homelessness of people who have been outside for at least a year and suffer from one of more acute disabilities?

RESPONSE: Reducing homelessness driven by a crisis of addiction and mental illness on our streets is a primary goal of the Administration. A recent study found stark differences between sheltered and unsheltered homeless people, including that unsheltered homeless people are more likely to report substance abuse (75%), physical (84%) or mental illness (78%), or to experience all three conditions concurrently (50%). Homelessness is now at record levels, in part because many jurisdictions have failed to address these realities. This administration is currently working to ensure cities and states have the tools they need to get people off the streets and into treatment. Accordingly, through the consolidated Emergency Solutions Grant program, HUD will support a local focus on street outreach, supportive services that improve health, housing stability and self-sufficiency, and emergency, short- and medium-term housing programs with robust wraparound services so that Americans have the opportunities they deserve to recover and gain independence.

Emergency Housing Vouchers

In 2021, Congress passed the American Rescue Plan, which provided $5 billion for the Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) Program to create an additional 70,000 HUD vouchers to help individuals and families access housing.

In March, you informed Public Housing Authorities that the Emergency Housing Voucher funding would likely run out by the end of calendar year 2026, even though it was authorized through September 2030.

Almost 60,000 households are currently utilizing Emergency Housing Vouchers, yet the President's Budget Request did not include a funding request for the Emergency Housing Voucher program.

Question 1: What will happen to the almost 60,000 households using Emergency Housing Vouchers if this funding runs out next year?

RESPONSE: Due to rapid inflation and poor fiscal decisions of the Biden Administration in managing this program, we estimate all remaining funds will be expended in the later months of 2026.

This administration seeks to work with public housing agencies with full transparency on this issue. In March 2025, HUD notified PHAs of their funding amounts through 2026 and that they should be managing their programs based on this amount of funding.

Question 2: Will you commit to working with Congress to appropriate additional funding to the Emergency Housing Voucher program?

RESPONSE: HUD is working through options on how best to close out this program while preventing families from losing their homes, and the Department is always open to working with Congress to find the best solution possible.

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