

Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery by Chair Maggie Hassan
Emerging Threats and Spending Oversight Subcommittee Hearing:
“Securing the Nation: Modernizing DHS’s Mission-Critical Legacy IT Systems”
May 31, 2023

Good morning, and welcome to our distinguished panel of witnesses. Thank you for appearing today to discuss the Department of Homeland Security’s reliance on aging information technology systems as it works to secure the nation, and why it is crucial that the Department and its component agencies modernize their mission-critical systems.

I also want to thank Ranking Member Romney and his staff for working with us on this hearing, and for our continued partnership to address emerging threats and reduce wasteful government spending.

Today’s hearing continues our subcommittee’s work to replace aging government technology that wastes taxpayer dollars, undermines our security, and limits government’s efficiency and responsiveness. As our subcommittee continues to encourage agencies to adopt modern systems that are more efficient, more cost-effective, and, frequently, more capable, we will hear today from senior DHS officials about how outdated technology negatively impacts the Department’s budget and our nation’s safety. For example, if an aging system that DHS uses to vet passengers or visitors traveling into or through the United States goes offline, there’s a chance that a dangerous person could enter the country. In such cases, work-arounds can help limit national security risks, but they can also cause commercial delays or miss real-time intelligence.

The Government Accountability Office and the DHS Inspector General have assessed DHS's IT modernization efforts and raised concerns about its reliance on outdated IT systems to perform mission-critical operations. They have looked at DHS IT systems that ensure the security of air travel, support disaster mitigation and preparedness activities, and enhance border security, and they have asserted that the failure of any of these systems would have a significant impact on public safety and national security. That is why it is crucial that DHS modernize these systems.

Today's hearing is an opportunity to examine how legacy information technology is a threat to national security and how DHS can responsibly update its systems. I look forward to hearing from all of our witnesses about the risks posed by legacy IT systems at DHS, and how DHS can successfully modernize these systems to keep the American people safe, secure, and free.