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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

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June 22, 2017

The Honorable John F. Kelly
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I write to reiterate my deep concerns about proposed cuts to several preparedness grant programs administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). These programs – the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), the State Homeland Security Program (SHSP), the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) program, the Transit Security Grant Program (TSGP), and the Port Security Grant Program (PSGP) – provide vital funding to state and local stakeholders in an effort to build resilience against terrorist attacks.

The President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 budget request for DHS prioritizes \$1.6 billion in spending on 74 miles of physical barrier along the Southwest border while reducing funding for FEMA preparedness grant programs by nearly \$450 million.¹ Given the number and magnitude of threats facing our country, I am concerned that the increased focus on the Southwest border may expose vulnerabilities in other areas – particularly in our nation's ability to prepare for, prevent, and respond to terrorist attacks. Just last week, Michael Leiter, a counterterrorism advisor to both President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama, testified before the Committee questioning this Administration's cuts to these programs, which he called "critical."²

The five preparedness grant programs mentioned above have provided the state of Missouri with more than \$43 million over the past three fiscal years.³ The funding has been used to sustain bomb squads, SWAT teams, HazMat entry teams, and technical rescue teams throughout the state. It has provided medical response caches at regional hospitals and equipped emergency medical responders with body armor protection. The funding has been used to build state and local law enforcement agencies' interoperable communications systems in the event of a catastrophic disaster and to launch a statewide school safety initiative called the Center for Education Safety. The Transit

¹ Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, *Budget Overview: Fiscal Year 2018 Congressional Justification* (May 2017).

² Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, *Ideology and Terror: Understanding the Tools, Tactics, and Techniques of Violent Extremism* (June 14, 2017).

³ Emails from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Congressional Affairs Division, to Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Staff (June 1, 2017) (June 7, 2017) (June 12, 2017).

The Honorable John F. Kelly
June 22, 2017
Page 2

Security and Port Security grant programs have supported efforts to defend Missouri's airports, bus stations, rail terminals, and commercial waterways against terrorist attacks.

The state of Missouri is home to more than 6 million residents and ten Fortune 500 companies.⁴ It features nearly 500 aviation facilities, including two of the nation's 50 busiest airports.⁵ Missouri has the 10th most miles of railroad track carrying the fourth largest freight load in the nation.⁶ Missouri waterways move more than 500 million tons of cargo each year.⁷ And as a trucking hub, the state has more than 130,000 miles of public roads, ranking sixth nationally.⁸ A reduction in federal UASI, SHSP, EMPG, TSGP, and PSGP funding could jeopardize the security of this – and other – critical infrastructure in my state.

The Office of Management and Budget stated that the proposed budget cuts are justified “in order to ensure adequate funding for core Department of Homeland Security missions, encourage grant recipients to begin to incorporate the full cost of preparedness activities into their own budgets, and fund those activities that demonstrate the greatest return on security investments,” adding that the federal government “cannot afford to over-invest” in these programs.⁹ I agree that state and local stakeholders must continue to invest in the defense of our homeland and that grant funding must have a proven return on investment. However, I question whether the budget request put forward by this Administration under-invests in programs that safeguard our nation against terrorist attacks.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Claire McCaskill
Ranking Member

cc: Ron Johnson
Chairman

⁴ Missouri Economic Research and Information Center, Missouri Department of Economic Development, *Fortune's 500 Companies: Missouri is Home to 10 Fortune 500 Businesses* (https://www.missourieconomy.org/industry/fortune_500/index.stm).

⁵ Missouri Department of Transportation, *Aviation – General Information* (<http://www.modot.org/othertransportation/aviation/aviationgeneralinformation.htm>).

⁶ Missouri Department of Transportation, *Freight Railroads* (<http://www.modot.org/othertransportation/rail/FreightRailroads.htm>).

⁷ Missouri Department of Transportation, *Waterways – General Information* (<http://www.modot.org/othertransportation/waterways/waterwaysgeneralinformation.htm>).

⁸ U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, *Missouri: Transportation by the Numbers* (Jan. 2016).

⁹ Office of Management and Budget, *Major Savings and Reforms: Budget of the U.S. Government, Fiscal Year 2018* (May 2017).