

Opening Statement
Ranking Member Rob Portman
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee
Examining FEMA's Strategic Priorities and Disaster Preparedness
June 22, 2022

Thank you, Chairman Peters.

Welcome, Administrator Criswell. We appreciate you being here today for your first oversight hearing since you were confirmed last April.

FEMA has a critical role in helping state and local governments prepare for and respond to catastrophic emergencies and disasters.

In order to carry out this mission, FEMA has more than 21,000 staff and a budget of more than \$24 billion.

One area, in particular, where FEMA provides unique support to the states is through the Technological Hazards Division which helps communities prepare for technological hazards from nuclear power plants and the last remaining U.S. Army chemical weapon stockpiles.

Unfortunately, there are gaps in this program.

While hundreds of communities face technological hazards, such as a chemical plant or radiological research facility, FEMA is only able to provide assistance to a small fraction located near nuclear power plants and the last remaining chemical weapon stockpiles.

Given ongoing threats and terrorist activities throughout the world, expanding the scope of the FEMA Technological Hazards Division is timely and would enhance FEMA's national preparedness framework by expanding the program into communities across the United States that are underprepared for a technological hazard.

In my home state of Ohio, there are over a thousand chemical plants and also a uranium enrichment plant where the surrounding communities are unable to receive this technological hazards preparedness support.

To address this critical need, Senator Sinema and I have introduced the "Technological Hazards and Preparedness Act" which would expand this support from FEMA to all communities with technological hazards.

I am pleased to say that we passed the bill out of committee just last month. And I look forward to working to get this to the President's desk by year's end.

FEMA has also plays an important role in helping secure Ohio and the rest of the country against possible terrorist attacks and violent extremists.

This includes the Nonprofit Security Grant Program which helps faith-based and community organizations secure their facilities from the ever increasing threat of violent extremists.

Ensuring that there are enough resources to help synagogues, Jewish Community Centers, and other faith-based organizations to secure their facilities effectively is a priority for me.

Over the past several years, I successfully led the bipartisan effort to expand this program to include not just urban areas, but all 50 states, and increase funding for this program.

In 2020, President Trump signed my bipartisan *Protecting Faith-Based and Nonprofit Organizations From Terrorism Act* into law. This legislation authorized the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) for five years, from FYs 2020 to 2024.

Under the legislation, funding may be used for target-hardening activities, training for personnel, and any other appropriate activity, as defined by the FEMA Administrator.

And every year since then, I've worked with my colleagues to increase the funding levels. The Fiscal Year 2022 bipartisan funding agreement included \$250 million for the NSGP, increasing the amount allocated in 2021 by \$70 million from a previous allocation of \$180 million.

I look forward to our discussion today as we examine FEMA's strategic priorities and your thoughts on our efforts to address gaps we have identified in FEMA's support to our communities.

Thank you.