

Ranking Member Kim Written Opening Statement

- Good afternoon, it's a pleasure to be here with you all. I'd like to extend a thank you to Chairman Hawley for holding this important hearing for our Subcommittee.
- I'd also like to thank all of our witnesses for coming before Congress to shed light on the important issues facing the fire apparatus industry and our fire departments.
- No matter where you live in America, the work of firefighters and fire departments is vital to your community.
- Earlier this year, we saw these brave men and women step up to fight against raging wildfires in my home state of New Jersey where over 6,000 acres of forest in Wharton State Park was burned.
- We also saw their dedication as they fought tirelessly to contain the devastating fires that ravaged the Palisades and Eaton communities in Los Angeles.
- As we approach the anniversary of 9/11, we all remember the brave role that firefighters played during one of the most tragic moments in our nation's history.
- I cannot imagine where we would be as a nation if our heroes did not step up on that day.
- 9/11 changed our country forever, and those events made it even more clear how important firefighters are in our communities. They not only put out fires in our neighborhoods but are also a first line of response during a national security emergency.
- There are countless more incidents where firefighters have stepped up to keep communities across the country safe.
- We should be doing all that we can to ensure that those on the frontlines have the equipment they need.
- Therefore, it makes sense that they be afforded the equipment they need to carryout their role. That includes the iconic American firetrucks we've all seen.
- What many of us haven't seen is the cost and hardship towns and localities go through to secure these trucks and meet the needs of their communities.
- I was astonished to learn that purchasing just one firetruck can cost well over a million dollars, and that's not even including the cost of repairs over its lifetime.
- Yet this is not equipment that small towns or even big cities can forego.

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- Earlier this year I was glad to join Chairman Hawley in sending a letter to the major companies in the fire apparatus industry, some of whom are represented here today, demanding answers to the questions that so many communities have, such as: what is the reason for delays in getting this necessary equipment? Why are the prices so high and seemingly volatile?
- Today, along with my colleagues, I want to continue the work we started and get to the bottom of the issues facing the fire apparatus industry. We must do a better job of making sure every American community can afford and have access to the equipment it needs to keep people safe.