

Chairman Peters Opening Statement As Prepared for Delivery
Full Committee Hearing: Resources and Authorities Needed to Protect and Secure the
Homeland
July 27, 2021

Thank you Secretary Mayorkas for being here today, and for your service to our nation. In accepting the nomination to be Secretary of Homeland Security, you inherited a number of serious challenges. You have a difficult job and I appreciate your unwavering commitment. I have been pleased to see the Department and the Administration take concrete steps to combat threats against American communities, including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Today, this Committee will discuss how we can help you and the dedicated workforce at DHS better protect the American people from these threats by examining the Administration's budget request for 2022.

Every year, the Homeland Security Secretary testifies before this committee to discuss the "tough choices" that were made to arrive at these final budgetary numbers, but we don't often hear how those decisions were made.

The numbers in this budget proposal represent decisions that will have a real effect on the safety of the American people. It is our duty to carefully consider your proposal and thoroughly evaluate the process that led you to these conclusions.

This year, I am pleased to see that your proposed budget focuses on tackling some of the most serious challenges and threats facing our nation. Challenges that have only been compounded by a pandemic that has taken the lives of more than 600,000 Americans and left serious economic destruction in its wake.

And, it's clear these threats to the American people will only grow and continue to evolve. This is especially true as we continue seeing a scourge of ransomware attacks against everything from K-12 schools, federal networks, small businesses, a major oil pipeline, even meat processing plants.

These attacks, which continue to disrupt countless American lives, show that we must ensure the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency and other federal entities responsible for our cyber defenses have the necessary resources to formulate an all of government response to foreign adversaries and criminal organizations who are relentlessly target network vulnerabilities and disrupt American lives and livelihoods.

At the same time, the Department must also be able to fight against physical threats that put thousands of American communities at risk.

In recent years, violence driven white supremacist and anti-government ideologies has continued to rise and lead to real world harm, as we saw from a deadly breach of the United States Capitol. I am pleased to see that this year's budget request supports addressing the root causes of this horrific violence by supporting innovative, community-based methods for countering and

collecting more information and data on domestic terrorism, while respecting the privacy of American citizens.

In addition to addressing these significant challenges, I look forward to hearing how the Department plans on investing in effective and modern border security that not only protects our nation, but also provides for efficient and fair processing of asylum seekers at our Southern Border. I hope to also continue working together to ensure secure and efficient lawful trade and travel at our nation's ports of entry, so that border states like Michigan can remain hubs for international commerce.

As the Department continues to address these significant challenges, it is also essential they work to counter the threats posed by climate change through disaster resilience and hazard mitigation.

Early investments in adaptation, mitigation and resiliency efforts will save taxpayer dollars in the long run. I appreciate that this budget request highlights the need to allocate more funding to reduce the risk for communities when disaster strikes.

It is my hope that this budget, and our discussion here today, will reflect that broad scope of challenging responsibilities, but also the Department's opportunities. Secretary Mayorkas, I look forward to hearing from you today.