

Statement of Mr. Christopher U. Browne, C.M.
On Behalf Of
The American Association of Airport Executives
Before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee
Roundtable – Securing the Border: Biometric Entry and Exit at our Ports of Entry
April 28, 2015

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to offer the views of airport executives on the path forward for a biometric entry and exit system at the nation's airports. I am participating today on behalf of the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE), which represents thousands of men and women across the country who manage and operate the nation's airports. I am actively involved with AAAE as a member of the association's Transportation Security Services Committee. In addition to my work with AAAE, I currently serve as Vice President and Airport Manager of Washington Dulles International Airport.

We greatly appreciate the committee's interest in the path forward for implementing biometric entry and exit systems at airports across the country. While there is an understandable urge to move forward quickly with deploying a system to collect biometric information from arriving and departing passengers at U.S. airports, it is critical that we understand the operational and financial impacts of doing so. The Department of Homeland Security and its component agencies deserve credit for working to understand those implications through the ongoing testing being conducted with Customs and Border Protection and the DHS Science and Technology Directorate. We look forward to continuing our engagement with that important process.

There is much potential ground to cover during today's discussion and as the Committee moves forward with its work in this area. Let me briefly highlight a few key points from the perspective of AAAE and airport executives for your consideration.

- AAAE and the aviation industry broadly support the testing being conducted by the DHS Science and Technology Directorate, and we urge that the fact-finding effort be permitted to remain on track and not be arbitrarily expedited.
- The testing must accurately assess all of the enabling costs normally borne by airport operators, including the often high costs of integrating new technologies into legacy facilities (ie: WiFi).
- The solution must be operationally flexible and not contradict the goals of Congress and the Administration to increase travel and tourism.
- The solution cannot pull resources such as personnel and funding from other proven and successful measures.
- This should be viewed as part of a "layered defense" that along with other measures will provide a cumulative reduction in risk. As such, we need to be sure that we invest in viable "layers" and not let this initiative contradict other viable and meaningful security measures.
- A viable solution must avoid overly-complicated and expensive operational features.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to participate in today's discussion and look forward to working with you and with the Department to chart a workable path forward.