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STATE OF EMERGENCY: THE DISASTER OF CUTTING PREPAREDNESS GRANTS

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,
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Chairman, Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications

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Bill de Blasio

Mayor, City of New York, New York

Jim Butterworth

Director, Emergency Management Agency/Homeland Security, State of Georgia

Testifying on behalf of the National Emergency Management Association

Rhoda Mae Kerr

Fire Chief, City of Austin Fire Department, Austin, Texas

Testifying on behalf of the International Association of Fire Chiefs

George Turner

Chief of Police, Atlanta Police Department, Atlanta, Georgia

Testifying on behalf of the Major Cities Chiefs

Mike Sena

Director, Northern California Regional Intelligence Center

Testifying on behalf of the National Fusion Center Association

Sgt. W. Greg Kierce

Director, Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, City of Jersey City, New Jersey

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**Statement of Subcommittee Chairman Dan Donovan (R-NY)
Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communication Subcommittee
House Homeland Security Committee**

*State of Emergency: The Disaster of Cutting Preparedness Grants
March 15, 2016*

Remarks as Prepared

As Chairman of the Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications, my fundamental responsibility is to ensure our nation's first responders have the tools they need to protect this country and, God forbid, respond to the next terrorist attack. That is why my first hearing is focusing on the dangerous cuts to homeland security grants proposed in the President's Fiscal Year 2017 budget request.

The President's budget cuts more than \$500 million from programs that support states, cities, ports, transit systems, and the fire services. This funding helps provide the training and equipment so crucial to enabling our first responders to meet threats as varied as active shooter scenarios, mass-casualty events from a nuclear, chemical or biological attack, and bomb plots targeting civilians in high-traffic areas.

Such threats aren't just theories – in the nearly 15 years since the tragic attacks in 2001, law enforcement has thwarted sinister plots like these and more, including one involving an ISIS sympathizer in my district. As this committee documented in a recent report issued by Chairman McCaul, there have been 75 terrorism plots against the west since early 2014. 43 percent of them were successfully executed, and the United States is the top target.

Law enforcement, including the NYPD and Joint Terrorism Task Forces, deserve our thanks for keeping Americans safe. So far there have been 81 ISIS linked arrests in the United States, a number that will only grow as the organization continues to spread viral terrorism over the Internet.

Proposing cuts to the programs that keep the homeland safe would be foolish in any case, but they are particularly outrageous at a time when our threat level is the highest it's been since 9/11.

It would seem that either the President doesn't believe these threats exist, or he doesn't care. But make no mistake: this is NOT the time for the federal government to cut support to help our nation's first responders combat terror attacks.

In discussing the budget proposal with the Administration, we've heard various justifications for the cuts. They've told us that the cuts are a result of "FEMA's successful investments in prior years." They've claimed that it is a result of unspent funding from prior years. And they've told us that the cuts are the result of difficult budget decisions and that this budget "...funds all of our vital homeland security missions in these challenging times." The truth of the matter is they've chosen to balance the budget on the backs of first responders, knowing that many in Congress will vociferously oppose the cuts.

We have heard time and again that these grant programs have made a difference. We heard it after the Boston Marathon bombings. We heard it after natural disasters like Hurricane Sandy, which devastated my district, and the tornadoes in Moore, Oklahoma.

I am especially interested to hear how the recent investments made by New York City using federal homeland security grants, such as hiring additional counterterrorism officers this year, could be hamstrung by the sudden drop in federal funds. New York City and the other jurisdictions that benefit from federal security grants have made real contributions to increasing our country's readiness to meet terrorist threats. However, for local efforts to be truly effective, there must be a meaningful partnership with the federal government.

Congress, and this Committee in particular, has a history of bipartisanship when it comes to protecting our country and supporting first responders. We did it last year when we came together to permanently reauthorize the Zadroga Act to give 9/11 first responders the health treatment and screenings they earned, and I am pleased to be here today working with Ranking Member Payne to oppose these dangerous homeland security cuts.

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