

**TESTIMONY**  
**CONGRESSMAN ADRIANO ESPAILLAT (NY-13)**  
**House Committee on Appropriations**  
**June 22, 2020**

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to share my priorities with the committee. In addition to those requests submitted via your electronic system earlier this year, I would like to bring a few of these to your attention.

**CARIBBEAN BASIN SECURITY INITIATIVE**

The Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI) remains instrumental in combatting the flow of narcotics into the United States, combatting crime and corruption in the region, and promoting good governance.

The 2018 National Drug Threat Assessment, prepared by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), estimated that approximately 7% of northbound cocaine flows from South America moved through the Eastern Caribbean in 2017.<sup>1</sup> However, with the quadrupling of Colombian cocaine production (which makes up 93% of South American cocaine seized in the U.S.) since 2012, the volume of cocaine moving through the Eastern Caribbean may have significantly increased over recent years.

At the current funding level of \$60 million, though, there is a lack of resources to combat the increase in Colombian cocaine production and for other vital undertakings, from cognitive and behavioral programs that provide services for at-risk youth, to cybersecurity training for journalists working to expose corruption, to financial crime monitoring, to procurement of high-speed patrol

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<sup>1</sup> "National Drug Threat Assessment." December 2018. <https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2018-11/DIR-032-18%202018%20NDDTA%20final%20low%20resolution.pdf>.

boats to intercept incoming illicit drugs. Therefore, **I request that the Committee provide at least \$80 million in funding to the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative for FY21.**

### **GREEN CLIMATE FUND**

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) is an independent, multilateral fund established by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to help developing countries limit or reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change. Developing countries face disproportionate threats of climate change, while many developing countries have a greater potential to mitigate climate change than they have capacity to do so. The GCF provides funding for mitigation and adaptation activities that are locally led and which provide protections for indigenous communities, communities of color, women, and other frontline communities. This is a form of global environmental justice.

Under the Obama Administration, the United States pledged \$3 billion to the GCF, though only contributed \$1 billion of that pledge. We are the only country to have substantially fallen short of its pledge. Just recently, during its first replenishment period, countries pledged over \$10 billion to the GCF, without the leadership of the United States. Now, I ask the Committee to return the U.S. to its role of international leadership. **As such, I urge the Committee to provide \$750 million in funding to the Green Climate Fund, and to include the following language in the report accompanying this year's bill: "Funds made available by the Act may be made available for a United States contribution to the Green Climate Fund."**

### **CONFEDERATE SYMBOLS**

While not included in my original requests, recent events have precipitated the need to include this new request. With protests for racial justice across the country have continued for a month, focus on the presence of monuments to Confederates has been renewed. The American

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people in the street are calling out the wrong of Confederate symbols across America, whether in the form of monuments, the names of military bases, or the names of schools and highways. Not only does the elevation of Confederate symbols wrongly serve to laud those who fought for slavery, not only does it honor those who fought against this Union, but it also demonstrates to communities of color that this country has yet to abandon its heinous, racist history and the legacy of slavery. I have introduced the *No Federal Funding for Confederate Symbols Act*, which has received broad support from my colleagues and from advocate groups. **As such, I urge the Committee to include in its bill a prohibition of federal funding for Confederate symbols.**

### **Transportation:**

First and foremost, I appreciate the committee's continued bipartisan support of Capital Investment Grants despite the Trump Administration's repeated attempts to eliminate or cut the program. I have joined with my colleagues Earl Blumenauer and Jackie Walorski in leading a letter from dozens of members on both sides of the aisle in support of the program. It is critical for New York's ability to get projects big and small off the ground. A major one, the extension of the Second Avenue Subway north to Harlem, will eliminate a persistent transit desert and alleviate other overcrowded subway lines, while bringing hundreds of good-paying jobs and supporting many small businesses in underserved communities. CIG has also helped the city implement Bus Rapid Transit lines, which greatly improves commuter experiences in areas not served by our subway system. I was greatly appreciative of the increase you provided to CIG's New Starts Program. I hope you will continue to provide robust funding and I urge you to use your oversight abilities to ensure the agency is moving positive-rated projects along to Full Funding Grant Agreements so that appropriated funding is obligated to projects in the program's pipeline in a timely manner.

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I must voice my support for finding a way to fund the Gateway project, particularly the Hudson Tunnel project. We're approaching a serious point – after which there is no going back. If one of these tunnels fails or has to be taken out of service, it will cost the federal government billions of dollars. So regardless of the president's desire to use the project as a political football, we, the federal government, will be paying for the consequences. We can either pay for new, functioning critical infrastructure, or we can pay for our own inability to address this issue. I believe Congress must take the responsible route and find a way to get the federal share of this project funded.

### **Housing:**

New York City is home to the largest Public Housing Authority in North America known as NYCHA. NYCHA is responsible for over 176,000 public housing apartments serving almost 400,000 residents. NYCHA serves low-income tenants including recipients of the Housing Choice Voucher Program; Project Based Vouchers; and Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing HUD programs.

For NYCHA to effectively serve its tenants, it requires a commitment to robust funding from the Public Housing Operating Fund as well as the Section 8 Voucher Program. I urge this committee to invest fully and substantially in both funds in FY2021, especially as we see the impact of COVID-19 on low-income families who rely on NYCHA and Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) nationwide.

As this committee is aware, Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) are vital tools that cities and localities have used to construct and rehabilitate housing as NYCHA has done with over 19,000 households and counting. I would urge continued support of this program.

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Finally, as we enter the summer months, we know that hurricane season will soon begin. In the years since Hurricanes Maria and Irma hit Puerto Rico and other natural disasters impacting the mainland U.S., we have relied on the Community Development Block Grant Program for Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program for recovery and rebuilding. I want to make sure that the distinguished Chairman and Ranking Member know how vital a resource this program and its funding are to continued and future safety and urge this committees support.

Thank you again for providing me with this opportunity to share some important priorities.