

CONGRESSWOMAN SHEILA JACKSON LEE (TX-18)

STATEMENT BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS FULL COMMITTEE

VIRTUAL MEMBER DAY HEARING ON APPROPRIATIONS ACTS FOR FY 2022

9

TUESDAY, JUNE 9, 2021

10:00 A.M.

CISCO WEBEX

(S JL requested to be online at 12:20 p.m. and scheduled to testify at 12:30 p.m.)

Chairwoman DeLauro, Ranking Member Granger and distinguished Members of the Committee:

- As a senior member of the Committees on the Judiciary and on Homeland Security, let me offer my appreciation and thanks to Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Granger for the difficult work and choices that must be made to produce truly bipartisan spending bills, and for their commitment to producing bills that fairly reflect the interests and priorities of the American people.
- I especially wish to thank Chairwoman DeLauro for her leadership in establishing a process for the Committee to consider, guided by important reforms that build on existing House Rules and prioritize accountability, transparency, and strong community support, Community Funding Projects – and thereby take advantage of Members’ deep knowledge of the pressing needs in their districts.
- As you pointed out Madam Chair, “Community Project Funding is a critical reform that will make Congress more responsive to the people” and help restore the balance between the legislative and executive branches on important decisions about how and where to spend taxpayer dollars.”
- I understand that my entire statement will be made part of the record so I will keep my remarks brief and in the few minutes allotted I wish to highlight the Community Projects Funding requests that I have submitted for the Committee’s consideration.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS FUNDING REQUESTS

1. Recipient: Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corp.

Amount: \$1,000,000

Description: The requested funding will support a Juvenile Justice Diversion program created by the Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation and Pleasant Hill Ministries, in partnership with the Harris County District Attorney's Office and Juvenile Probation, a critically needed community program that has assisted on average 100 children each year. The funding will allow expansion of the program to expand and provide services to at-risk youth who live outside the Fifth Ward.

2. Recipient: City of Houston, (HISD)

Amount: \$4,000,000

Description: This funding will be used to construct the Bethune Empowerment Center and the East End Facility for Latino Arts (Talento Bilingue de Houston). The City of Houston is developing a sustainable long-term plan for the city-owned facility in the East End Cultural District. The theater needs tech upgrades, an updated ticketing system, rest room and dressing room updates, fly system repairs, seating and HVAC improvements and repairs. This project is a foundation of the cultural landscape of Houston's East End over the next ten years.

3. Recipient: Houston Independent School District HISD

Amount: \$1,060,000

Description: This funding will be used to construct "The Vison" Community Statue Project on the historic Booker T. Washington High School campus, which will become a sustainable growing environment that will provide a living laboratory food education center as well as a production facility. The grounds will feature raised beds gardens for food production. The raised beds gardens will act as a carbon sink to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it in soil and plants. A wind farm will be installed that can supply electrical energy to the entire project and the football field. There will also be two container houses to be used for the display of historical and engineering artifacts and a container house for use as a Plant Factory with Artificial Lighting (PFAL).

4. Recipient: Houston Independent School District HISD

Amount: \$1,000,000

Description: This funding will be used for Project Engagement, an initiative to provide social and emotional learning services to high-needs students, and will provide funding for Project Engagement at Houston ISD's eight early childhood centers, 160 elementary schools, and 40 middle schools, and 10 K-8 schools (218 schools) for one academic year.

The communities served by HISD are comprised of African Americans (24%) and Hispanic (61.84%) students. HISD is the seventh largest school district in the nation with over 214,000 children served by 278 campuses. These challenges are exacerbated by the fact that HISD has 74.72% of its students who meet the federal criteria for free and reduced lunches; 71.63% of the students served are considered at-risk, and 31.47% of students have limited English proficiency. The onset of COVID-19 brought additional hardship when schools closed due to the health crisis and tens of thousands of students lost critical services and support provided by local schools.

HISD does not have the resources needed to provide these critical services and the Texas state government has refused to spend the nearly \$19 billion in federal funding provided to address local K-12 education needs of schools, educators, children and youth during the COVID-19 pandemic emergency.

5. Recipient: City of Jacinto City

Amount: \$1,950,000

Description: The funding will be used to replace aging water and delivery infrastructure to a large portion of Jacinto City's residential and business districts. The current water distribution lines are at least 75 years old and are unable to provide adequate volume or the required pressure needed to serve our residents or to provide adequate fire flows. The most recent ISO inspection cited poor water infrastructure as a key problem in the area due to the system's inability to deliver the volume of water needed to protect several of the larger structures including a three-story hotel, an event center and several large strip centers.

The project area includes the city's only library and only major grocery store. Also included are several hundred residents and dozens of restaurants and other small businesses. There is also a large life safety concern due to the area containing two kidney dialysis centers which are fully dependent on a constant flow of potable water at an

adequate pressure. Recent water distribution failures in this area have impacted both of the dialysis centers, restaurants and the city's only hotel, theater and shopping centers.

6. Recipient: Harris County, Texas

Amount: \$22,760,000

Description: This funding will be used for three flood projects, the Stormwater Detention Basin and Culvert Improvement; the Aldine Westfield Stormwater Detention Basin; and the Blue Bell Regional Stormwater Detention Basin.

7. Recipient: City of Houston, (Houston Police Dept.)

Amount: \$975,000

Description: This funding will be used to support the employment of nine (9) crime victim advocates via the BYRNE Justice Assistance Grants Program. These advocates help the department provide a trauma-informed response for victims of violent crimes.

8. Recipient: Texas Southern University

Amount: \$10,000,000

Description: This will fund the Urban Public Health Initiative - Health Professions Education and Workforce Development and Health Facilities Construction and Equipment Program.

9. Recipient: Houston Community College

Amount: \$7,913,050

Description: This funding will be used to fund a Regional Resiliency Operations Center (RROC) for program development, training and certification of disaster and mitigation professionals.

10. Recipient: Port of Houston Authority

Amount: \$1,500,000

Description: This funding will be used to begin a sedimentation study concurrent with the deepening and widening of the Houston Ship Channel.

HOUSTON METRO & THE PRESIDENT'S AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN

- The President's American Rescue Plan could speed the delivery of METRO's transit plan which includes the following:
 - \$2.10 billion for Light Rail extensions to Hobby Airport, the North Shepherd Park and Ride as well as across Buffalo Bayou in Downtown,

- \$3.23 billion for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT),
 - \$1.56 billion for new and improved High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV lanes),
 - \$179 million for the enhancement of high frequency bus routes throughout the METRO service area, and
 - \$414 million for new and improved Park & Ride facilities and transit centers.
- METRO Next is a \$7.5 billion, 20-year, transit plan that was approved by the voters in the METRO area along with \$3 billion in bonding authority. The plan generally assumed a 50/50 split on federal grants however if the American Rescue Plan ensures at least 80 percent federal shares as was once the norm METRO could vastly accelerate all of the projects envisioned in the plan.
 - The plan enables METRO to serve more people and more places, provides better access to the underserved and disabled, and implements innovation to keep the Houston region moving and well positioned for the future.

REQUESTED REPORT LANGUAGE:

- Finally, Madam Chair, I would request the Committee to include the following language in the report:

Anti-White Nationalist Domestic Terrorism Actions

“The Committee is cognizant of the vulnerabilities to the safety and security of persons, property, and interests working or located in the U.S. Capitol and its environs.

“The insurrection that occurred on January 6, 2021, when an incited mob of domestic terrorists, white nationalists and supremacists laid siege to the Capitol Building in order to disrupt a constitutionally mandated duty of the Congress is a dark stain on the nation’s history, and exacerbated by the fact that a large number of the marauders had previously taken oaths – as law enforcement officers, as members of the military, and as civil servants and contractors - to uphold and defend the Constitution, and to do so with true faith and allegiance.

“The U.S. Intelligence Community has assessed that domestic terrorism, particularly white supremacy and white nationalist organizations, is the greatest and most imminent threat to our nation and democratic form of government. The Committee applauds the service and sacrifice of the

men and women who serve the American people in the civilian and military sectors of government.

“The Committee, however, cautions and directs the Secretary to exercise vigilance and take decisive action to identify, isolate, and remove from service individuals whose actions of January 6, 2021 at the U.S. Capitol or whose connections, actions, or affiliations with white nationalist organizations pose a threat to the security of the United States.

“Actions the Secretary should take include undertaking an immediate review of a clearance when a security clearance holder is reported to have engaged in violent acts against individuals, property, or public spaces based on the security clearance holder’s association or sympathy with persons or organizations that advocate, threaten, or use force or violence, or any other illegal or unconstitutional means, in an effort to prevent others from exercising their rights under the Constitution or laws of the United States or of any State, based on factors including, at a minimum, race, religion, national origin, or disability.”

CONCLUSION

- Madam Chair, I thank you and the Ranking Member for your leadership and for extending me this opportunity to share my major priorities with the Subcommittee.