

**Written Testimony for Homeland Security Subcommittee, Appropriations**

Hon. Brad Schneider, Illinois's Tenth Congressional District

April 26, 2018

Mr. Chairman, Ms. Ranking Member, and distinguished colleagues of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to speak before the Committee. I am here today to request robust funding for the Department of Homeland Security, specifically for four programs of particular importance to the residents of my district and our country.

The United States has always been a nation of immigrants and a shining beacon of hope for those fleeing oppression and seeking a better life. I testified before this subcommittee last year and since that time I have participated in a handful of naturalization ceremonies in my congressional district. I can't begin to explain how meaningful it is to experience these ceremonies, especially meeting the individuals who now proudly call themselves Americans.

My grandmother and great-grandparents came to the United States in the early 1900's, fleeing the persecution of Jews in czarist Russia. This country gave her and her family boundless opportunities and they were able to make a wonderful life for themselves. That is why I am committed to both ensuring the safety and security of the American people, and also ensuring our country remains a beacon for immigrants and land of opportunity for all.

I vehemently oppose President Trump's travel ban that arbitrarily bars entry of people seeking refuge from certain countries into this country. His travel ban does nothing to target the root causes of terrorism, does not make our country safer, and undermines the very values that define our nation.

The Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) plays an important role in processing applications for those seeking entry into the United States as asylum seekers, refugees, or through other U.S. humanitarian programs. USCIS faces major backlogs and delays when processing applications, so I continue to urge this committee to work with them, and other agencies involved in the refugee screening process, to identify whether there are ways to improve and ensure the timely processing of refugee and

asylum applications.

I also urge the Committee to continue funding for the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI- pronounced U-AHH-SY) program, which assists high-threat urban areas to build and sustain the necessary capabilities to prevent, mitigate, respond to and recover from acts of terrorism. I have heard from emergency responders across my district about the importance of this program in keeping our communities safe. UASI funds are critical to first responders as well as enabling regional coordination across districts and our state.

Additionally, I'd like to highlight one specific program within UASI that is of critical importance. This is the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP). The NSGP was created so at-risk nonprofit organizations that serve as community centers have the resources they need to protect themselves against potential threats. These funds may be used for important capital improvements to upgrade much needed security measures.

Underscoring the need for this program is the troubling rise of domestic extremism and hate incidents across the country. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center the number of hate groups increased by 4 % from 2016 to 2017 (from 917 to 954, respectively). Additionally, the Anti-Defamation League found that anti-Semitic incidents increased 57% from 2016 to 2017 (1,267 incidents and 1,986 incidents, respectively).

These statistics exemplify the threats non-profit organizations across the country face and the need to take these threats seriously. Therefore, I urge this subcommittee to continue this critical funding for the NSGP.

Finally, I would like to discuss the importance of the Assistance to Firefighter Grant (AFG) and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant programs. Fire departments and emergency response personnel in my congressional district have benefitted greatly from these programs, which provide much needed resources, including personnel, training, and equipment. AFG and SAFER have had an enormous impact on public safety, but

the demand for these resources continues. I urge you to continue to fund these vital grants programs that help keep our communities safe.

I realize the tough budgetary decisions that lie before this subcommittee and appreciate your consideration of my priorities and requests for fiscal year 2019.