

The Honorable Matt Cartwright (PA-17)
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Member's Day Testimony
March 9, 2017

Thank you Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the subcommittee for the opportunity to speak with you today. In my testimony, I will highlight three policy areas where I urge this subcommittee to give attention to during the FY18 appropriations process.

LEAD HAZARD CONTROL

I first call attention to the persistent problem of lead in our communities and to advocate for full funding support for the Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes in the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Citizens across the country are rightly concerned about the threat of lead to public health—a concern highlighted by the crisis in Flint, Michigan. But in districts such as mine, the threat of lead comes not from the public drinking water systems but from old plumbing and paint in our homes.

As you may know, in FY2014 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention spent nearly \$2 million as part of a three-year funding commitment to help some of the biggest cities in the country monitor lead exposure. The results were alarming. In Pennsylvania, nearly 10 percent of the more than 140,000 kids tested had elevated levels of lead in their blood. The major cities of my district—Scranton and Wilkes Barre—have a high percentage of homes built before 1940s, when the use of lead-based paint was still common.

This is why I strongly support robust funding for HUD's lead prevention programs. The Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes provides funds to state and local governments to develop

cost-effective ways to reduce lead-based paint hazards. In addition, the office enforces HUD's lead-based paint regulations, provides public outreach and technical assistance, and conducts technical studies to help protect children and their families from health and safety hazards in the home. As the problem of lead in our homes and its impact on our health and our children's health persists, we need to continue this important work, and I ask the Subcommittee to provide full funding for this office's efforts.

RAIL

Second, I urge the Subcommittee to increase its support for our long-neglected national railway network. In many parts of the world, especially in Europe and in the emerging, fast-growing economies of Asia, citizens enjoy advanced, modern intercity railway systems that improve their quality of life, drive business activity, and boost productivity. America has fallen behind the curve in this area.

In Northeast Pennsylvania, for example, our cities would benefit tremendously from rail links that connect our region to New York and New Jersey. This will help bring companies and growth to our region and improve the lives of the thousands of people who make this grueling commute already by car. In addition, investment in rail decreases road congestion, improves transportation safety, and curbs our emission of pollutants that contribute to climate change. By laying new tracks and increasing connectivity for our workers, entrepreneurs, and visitors, we will send a powerful signal to the private sector that our rural regions and cities are places where businesses can thrive and have access to resources, talent, and new ideas. In short, restoring an efficient railway network will create jobs in the near term and make our economy more competitive in the long term.

AVIATION

I begin by commending the Subcommittee's work in the area of aviation. Over the last eight years, this Committee has provided more than 99% of the Federal Aviation Administration's budget request. Your support of the programs and activities of the FAA are recognition that the United States operates the largest, most complex air traffic control system in the world.

In that regard, I want to urge the Subcommittee to continue its vigorous support for the FAA's effort to modernize our air traffic control system. Transitioning from ground-based radar navigation to satellite-based navigation is a complicated endeavor and through your support, the FAA has made noteworthy progress in its NextGen program, from the installation of automatic-dependent satellite broadcast ground stations to the advancements in data communications. Investments in NextGen will not only create a more efficient system but will yield additional capacity and safety benefits.

Finally, I urge the Subcommittee to continue to support efforts to ensure that our pilots are adequately trained and rested to ensure our nation's excellent record of safety. In that regard, I hope that you will resist any efforts to weaken or eliminate any regulations that might put the flying public at risk.

Our nation's air traffic control system is a public asset and your work is supported by the millions of passengers that pay into the airport and airway trust fund each and every time they fly. I hope you will continue to make your effort to ensure that our air traffic control system remains under your careful oversight. Thank you for your time.