

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the Committee.

My name is Mike Chapman, I am the elected Sheriff of Loudoun County, Virginia. I appreciate being invited to testify at this important hearing during what is one of the most important weeks of the year for law enforcement.

Loudoun County sits about 30 miles southwest of Washington, DC, and is home to about 450,000 residents.

I am in my 46<sup>th</sup> year of law enforcement, having served as a police officer and detective in Maryland, twenty-three years with the Drug Enforcement Administration as a Special Agent from coast to coast and in three foreign assignments, and over 12 years as the elected sheriff in Virginia's largest full-service sheriff's office employing close to 900. Prior to being elected sheriff, I served three years as a law enforcement subject matter expert with Booz Allen. I bring first-hand knowledge of police work, federal experience, a private sector perspective, and the complexities associated with the elected office of sheriff.

I am here today on behalf of the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) and serve as its Chair for Homeland Security and on its Board of Directors.

I'd like to address today's hearing "Standing Strong on the Thin Blue Line: How Congress Can Support State and local Law Enforcement." Historically and currently law enforcement collaborates well together, regardless if it is a sheriffs' office or police department. When national law enforcement organizations collectively present their concerns and positions – whether in support or opposition to legislation – Congress needs to listen. Congress' decision can significantly impede law enforcement's service, performance – i.e. investigations or even recruiting. Supplying grant money or funding is not the cure all. Backing from Congress in all aspects is essential.

This is National Police Week as America honors the day-to-day service and sacrifice of our law enforcement community. And on this day, Peace Officer Memorial Day, we honor those who have given their lives in the line of duty. This year we have already witnessed 58 line of duty deaths among law enforcement officers, with 21 of those by gunfire.

Our job is dangerous, and we need your help to serve and protect our communities - and ourselves. We ask that you recognize how law enforcement has and continues to raise the bar. The progress I have witnessed since I was hired to be a police officer in 1978 when it comes to training, professionalism, innovation, and best practices is nothing short of amazing. It is important that you recognize this progress and publicly show your support for our profession. It is also important that you listen so that you can help us do our job better.

Let's start with intelligence gathering and police response.

Currently, there are 80 state or locally run fusion centers in 50 states and US territories. They receive grant federal grant funding which accounts for about 1/3<sup>rd</sup> the cost of operation. There is

also federal, state and local coordination through six strategically placed Regional and Information Sharing Systems (RISS) centers across the U.S.

Considering that local law enforcement are the boots on the ground, it is critical that federal information flows quickly in our direction, even if the information is incomplete. The responsibility for this communication and coordination primarily falls under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Intelligence and Analysis (I&A). I&A is the only federal entity that is statutorily required to coordinate homeland security threat information sharing with state and local governments through fusion centers. Congress should ensure I&A is equipped and empowered to carry out that mission effectively.

In Loudoun County, I experienced a personal case study with DHS regarding poor communication, both laterally with other federal agencies, and onward to state and local agencies.

In February 2022, I was made aware that some 1,000 refugees from Afghanistan would be arriving in Loudoun County in two weeks as part of “Operation Allies Welcome” following the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. This would be the first wave during a six month period – all to be located at the National Conference Center dorm-style living facility in a suburban, residential area of our county next to a middle and high school.

I immediately reached out to the DHS’ Chief of Staff for additional information and to question their lack of notification earlier to local law enforcement and our public safety partners. We needed to know how well were the refugees were vetted, if the local hospital had been contacted, if school personnel and community members living within walking distance been notified, if any houses of worship had been contacted, if language capabilities services been retained, and how security would be conducted. Unfortunately, none of these concerns had been addressed. DHS subsequently postponed resettlement for 2 weeks, still not addressing these issues.

I alerted the public and organized a community stakeholders' meeting including dozens of agencies which led to specific assignments and a community forum that, for the most part, alleviated the apprehension of the community. Our local initiative made a huge difference. For the next six months potential chaos was averted, and there were no major public safety incidents. This extraordinary effort, however, would not have been necessary had DHS communicated an organized plan. We hope that this will improve in the future.

Today we face a new set of challenges on many of our college campuses and cities over matters in the Middle East. It is critical that we receive timely information from DHS to get ahead of the curve.

We need your help. We need your backing. We need improved communication from DHS to our local officers and deputies. Thank you, again, for holding this hearing, and for listening.