**Statement of Mr. Christopher U. Browne, C.M.**
**On Behalf Of**
**The American Association of Airport Executives**
**Before the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Transportation Security**
**Stakeholder Perspectives: TSA's Efforts to Advance Risk-Based Security**
**April 11, 2013**

Chairman Hudson, Ranking Member Richmond, members of the subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to offer the views of airport executives on the Transportation Security Administration's efforts to advance risk-based security. I am testifying today on behalf of the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE), which represents thousands of men and women across the country who manage and operate the nation's airports. I am actively involved with AAAE as vice-chair of the association's Transportation Security Services Committee. In addition to my work with AAAE, I currently serve as Vice President and Airport Manager of Washington Dulles International Airport.

**Airport Executive Support PreCheck and Want to Facilitate Rapid Program Expansion**
Mr. Chairman, I want to focus the majority of my comments today on TSA's PreCheck program, which, as you know, offers expedited screening and a better travel experience to low-risk passengers who have voluntarily provided information about themselves for government vetting.

Airport executives are enthusiastic supporters of PreCheck, and we believe that Administrator Pistole and his team deserve immense credit for their leadership in moving forward with the program and other risk-based initiatives. The work of TSA to bring 40 airports on-line to date with PreCheck is notable, and we are encouraged by the goal established by Administrator Pistole to expand the program further as part of broader efforts to provide expedited screening by year-end to 25 percent of individuals currently processed through security screening.

In today's difficult budget environment and with passenger levels increasing at many airports across the country, it is imperative that TSA deploy limited federal resources effectively. PreCheck offers great promise in that regard – although steps must be taken in short order to greatly expand the number of eligible individuals who participate in the program. Absent a robust, critical mass of participants, the program will ultimately fail to fully achieve its objectives of enhanced security and efficiency.

A lack of program participants could also exacerbate wait time problems for the majority of travelers who must use "non PreCheck" lanes for screening – a situation that neither the traveling public nor you as policymakers will accept in the long-term. While we appreciate the action the agency is taking in the short term through the "Managed Inclusion" pilot and other initiatives to more fully utilize PreCheck lanes for expedited screening, it is clearly in the long-term interest of the agency and the traveling public to ensure that as many individuals as possible are enrolled in and utilizing the PreCheck program and associated processes.

The steps that TSA has taken to this point through its largely airline-centric approach to facilitate participation from a limited pool of elite fliers and with Global Entry participants have provided a good start, but the agency must greatly accelerate enrollment in the program to gain widespread participation. Airport executives have a long history of facilitating participation in trusted

traveler programs, such as Registered Traveler, and we are eager to play a more active role in the days ahead to significantly grow enrollment in PreCheck.

Ultimately, airport executives would like to see the program expanded to accommodate as many additional, qualified travelers as possible through a community based, airport-centric approach that allows vastly larger populations of travelers to enroll and participate in PreCheck approved programs on an airport-by-airport basis and to become trusted through government approved vetting protocols.

Unfortunately, airports currently lack the ability to enroll our customers into a TSA-approved system for vetting and program participation, leaving a prime opportunity for program expansion unutilized. By simply establishing security standards and technical specifications and allowing airports to enroll our customers into the program – just as participating air carriers currently do – TSA could significantly increase the opportunity for program participation and set us on a course for meeting the growth necessary to make PreCheck a success. Airport operators – as a regulated entity with deep ties to the communities they serve – are uniquely situated and qualified to facilitate enrollment in the PreCheck program, and we are eager for the opportunity to do so.

Mr. Chairman, from my perspective as an airport manager, I want to make sure that customers who utilize my airport have a predictable, consistent, efficient, secure experience through the screening process to the fullest extent possible. PreCheck has great potential for helping to achieve those goals, but the program must evolve to cover a much wider pool of participants at our facilities beyond Global Entry members or those who are fortunate enough to have status on a particular air carrier.

Airports hold the key to ensuring the future success of the program by encouraging additional enrollment and by designing an approach that makes sense at individual airport facilities, which can vary dramatically in terms of passenger mix, airport layout, and other critical factors. With robust airport involvement, the program can and should grow and give qualified participants assurances that when they fly out of Dulles International or any other particular airport, they will have the predictable, consistent experience they need and value.

**Airports Are Eager to Partner with TSA to Expand PreCheck Participation**
AAAE and airports have long supported the trusted traveler concept that underlies PreCheck, and we are actively working with TSA in an effort to rapidly expand the population of passengers participating in the program. We are also working collaboratively with TSA to address related issues affecting program expansion, including checkpoint configuration, queue management, modified LEO response expectations and public outreach and communication.

Airports long ago recognized that there was great potential value in terms of enhanced security and efficiency with the deployment of trusted traveler programs. Airports have also understood that they are uniquely situated to bring interested parties together to chart a course that would result in the successful deployment and operation of these types of programs.

Over the past decade, AAAE and individual airports have worked closely with TSA and the technology community to implement other specific trusted traveler programs, including Registered Traveler. In roughly one year, the RT program enrolled more than 250,000 travelers at 24 airports, proving the security and efficiency benefits that adoption of these programs

provides.  AAAE is encouraged by and supportive of recent private sector initiatives aimed at facilitating the wide-scale utilization of the trusted traveler approach at airports across the country.

Based on our prior success with trusted traveler initiatives, AAAE has encouraged TSA to utilize community-based, airport-centric enrollment options to facilitate the flow of additional information to the agencies on a significantly expanded number of low-risk passengers for eligibility in the PreCheck program. In addition to providing the volume of passengers necessary for TSA to realize the operational efficiencies for which the programs are designed, airport-specific public enrollment options will allow airport operators to proactively and directly participate in and promote the risk-based programs that they support.

By playing such a key role, airport operators will also benefit from local implementation of national programs that enhance security.  Airport involvement will also bolster the relationship between airport operators and local TSA staff, increase affinity to airports, and assist TSA in reducing the complexity while enhancing the customer experience at passenger screening checkpoints.  The success of TSA's efforts to advance intelligence driven risk-based security approaches is a top priority for AAAE and its airport leadership.

Airports are confident that in partnership with TSA they can help facilitate the deployment of robust trusted/known traveler programs that focus on enhanced security above all else in addition to expediting the travel experience.  These two pillars are the primary values that air travelers want and that each of you as policymakers rightly will demand.  By bringing efficiency back into the nation's airport screening checkpoints, TSA screeners will be able to better focus their resources on the critical task of providing more rigorous screening to individuals about whom we know less than those who use the system the most and have voluntarily submitted background information for extensive vetting and clearance.

**TSA Must Remain Focused on Its Primary Mission of Passenger and Baggage Screening**
While not the primary focus of today's hearing, we also wanted to bring to the subcommittee's attention our concern with proposals that continue to emerge to expand TSA's authority beyond its primary mission of passenger and baggage screening.  Expanding the agencies reach and responsibilities – particularly to areas already in capable local hands – runs contrary to efforts to more effectively align scarce resources with the areas of greatest threat in a risk-based approach.

As you know, airports play a critical role in aviation security, serving as an important partner to TSA in helping the agency meet its core mission of passenger and baggage screening.  The significant changes that have taken place in airports over the past decade with the creation of the TSA and its assumption of all screening duties have been aided dramatically by the work of the airport community, and we will serve as a critical local partner to the agency as it continually modifies its operations, including some of the risk-based security initiatives that are under discussion today.

In addition to partnering with TSA to meet its core mission, airports as public entities provide a critical local layer of security, performing a number of inherently local security-related functions at their facilities, including incident response and management, perimeter security, employee vetting and credentialing, access control, infrastructure and operations planning, and local law enforcement functions.  These important duties have long been local responsibilities that have

been performed by local authorities in accordance with federal standards and subject to federal oversight. Airport operators meet their security-related obligations with a sharp focus on the need to protect public safety, which remains one of their fundamental missions. The professionals who perform these duties at airports are highly trained and have the first responder authorities and responsibilities that we all value immensely.

From a security and resource perspective, it is critical that inherently local security functions – including incident response and management, perimeter security, employee vetting and credentialing, access control, infrastructure and operations planning and local law enforcement – remain local with federal oversight and backed by federal resources when appropriate. We urge the subcommittee and Congress to reject efforts to federalize local security functions at airports.

**Airport Credentialing and Access Control Should Remain With Local Airport Control**
One area of particular concern for airport executives that we are compelled to highlight for the subcommittee is an ongoing effort to "harmonize" or "modernize" various aspects of existing transportation worker vetting programs. In the aviation environment, the background check process for workers operates successfully as a federal/local partnership with the federal government holding sole responsibility for security threat assessments and other necessary government checks for prospective workers and with local airport authorities operating and managing enrollment, credentialing, badging, criminal history background check adjudication and access control systems in accordance with strict federal standards.

The current system for aviation ensures the highest level of security by combining the unique local experience, expertise, and knowledge that exists at individual airports with federal standardization, federal oversight, and federal vetting assets. Local involvement provides a critical layer of security and gives airports the operational control they require to ensure that qualified employees receive the credentials they need to work in the airport environment.

In contrast to the long-standing locally controlled credentialing and access control apparatus that exists in the aviation environment, the credentialing/access control system in place in the maritime environment with the Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) program is relatively new. Under the TWIC model, the federal government or its contractors are responsible for virtually all aspects of the process, including worker enrollment, applicant vetting, credential issuance and some elements of access control. In our view, the early results of TWIC have been uneven at best despite hundreds of millions of dollars in federal investments. The existing system in aviation operates at <u>no cost</u> to the federal government.

Some have suggested abandoning the successful local systems and processes already in place at airports with badging and access control to expand TSA and the federal government's control over more of the process as is the case with TWIC in the maritime environment. Airport executives oppose any move to shift any additional functions in aviation to the federal government as is contemplated under the agency's Universal Enrollment System (UES) and believe that such a move would <u>diminish security</u> by reducing or eliminating a critical, extra layer of security that is already in place in airports and absent with the TWIC approach.

Pursuing such an approach as planned under the UES would scuttle a successful local/federal model that has worked well for decades, eliminate local operational control, stymie significant efforts already under way at airports across the country to upgrade and biometrically enable

existing airport badging and access control systems, and significantly increase costs to the aviation industry with no demonstrable security benefit.

While the desire to centralize and federalize the process for all transportation worker vetting programs in the name of modernization or harmonization may be understandable from the federal government's perspective, airport executives are concerned about federal intrusion into existing processes that have worked well for decades. Airports are also very concerned about having to help foot the bill for these initiatives – estimated at $633 million through 2025 in appropriations and new fees as part of the Technology Infrastructure Modernization (TIM) program and associated UES – for changes that provide them with no demonstrable security or operational benefit. The current system in aviation operates efficiently and effectively at a fraction of the cost of other transportation vetting programs and at no cost to the federal government. We want to ensure that remains the case.

TSA can and should continue with its efforts to modernize and harmonize its internal vetting programs without the need to expand the federal government's responsibilities to include credentialing and access control in the aviation environment. As the subcommittee and Congress consider the TIM and UES programs, we urge you to exempt aviation from any new fees or requirements in recognition of the existing, successful, locally controlled credentialing and access control model and the significant investments that have been made locally over the years to those systems. Efforts to federalize any of these processes or functions are unnecessary and wasteful and should be rejected.

**Conclusion**
With federal resources under severe constraint and with more than 700 million passengers traveling through the U.S. aviation system each year – a number that is expected to grow significantly in the years ahead – it is imperative that TSA remain focused on its primary mission of passenger and baggage screening while pursuing risk-based approaches to enhance security and efficiency. AAAE and airport executives are encouraged by TSA's recent efforts with PreCheck, and we are eager to partner with the agency to expand the program to additional populations and airports through community based, airport-centric approaches.

I appreciated the opportunity to be here today and look forward to any questions you have.