

**Statement of Bonnie Allin, A.A.E.
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**House Committee on Homeland Security
Subcommittee
“Long Lines, Short Patience: Local Perspectives”**

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Good afternoon. My name is Bonnie Allin. I am the President/CEO of the Tucson Airport Authority, federally certificated operator of Tucson International Airport, a commercial service airport located in southern Arizona. The five largest U.S. domestic airlines providing service at Tucson International Airport fly to 18 non-stop destinations and/or connect our passengers to other destinations throughout the world. These airlines enplane approximately 1.8M passengers each year, which is down from our peak in 2008 of approximately 2.1M enplanements, a number we are beginning to grow back through various air service development initiatives. Ninety-five (95) percent of our traffic is origination/destination passengers, which means virtually everyone who travels through Tucson is subject to screening. Historically, passenger wait times at Tucson International Airport averaged approximately 10-15 minutes with maximum times rarely exceeding 20-30 minutes (even when we were at higher passenger levels). The safe, efficient and convenient processing of passengers is a key element in growing our passenger levels.

Chairman Katko, Ranking Member Payne, Representative McSally, Members of Congress, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for your leadership in this transportation security issue and the opportunity to speak with you today. It is my privilege to be here before you today to represent Category 1 (CAT1) airports.

Mr. Chairman and Members, on behalf of all airports, we appreciate the efforts by Congress to determine the causes of the security screening checkpoint issues and to explore meaningful solutions that provide efficiency without sacrificing security. I also thank you for the opportunity to be with you this morning to discuss some of the challenges facing Tucson International Airport with regard to growing wait times at passenger screening checkpoints.

I was fortunate enough to participate in last week's roundtable discussion on the same topic, and I am truly appreciative of the time and attention the subcommittee has devoted to understanding the causes of checkpoint processing delays and for your efforts to seek immediate and long-term action to address what is both an inconvenience for travelers and a security threat.

I also want to thank Representative McSally for her focus on this issue and for her work to draw attention to some of the specific challenges we face in Tucson.

The safety and security of people, property and aircraft are our highest priority. Airports, airlines and the TSA share the responsibility to provide this protection to the best of our combined abilities at commercial airports throughout the United States. This proactive protection can best be provided when all responsible parties are able to communicate effectively and have the authority to work collaboratively and cooperatively. It should be seamless and invisible to the traveling public, and it should be convenient and customer-friendly. Airports appreciate the very critical mission TSA has to screen and protect passengers and property, and we applaud the dedication of the front line screeners who have a very challenging job. We commend the willingness of Administrator Neffenger to listen to stakeholders and effect change. We have a dedicated local TSA staff, with which we have a very good working relationship.

Like many airports across the U.S., Tucson International Airport has experienced issues with long security checkpoint lines due to TSA short-staffing, the unavailability of PreCheck, and a host of other issues. Tucson International Airport's peak period was January through April. During February and March peak periods, passenger lines would stretch from one of our two concourse checkpoints across the ticket lobby almost reaching the other end of the terminal. Please see Exhibit A. Flights were delayed to wait for passengers or some missed their flights. With full loads, rebooking was often a problem, particularly for those international customers with connections attending the International Tucson Gem and Mineral Show.

The long lines at security checkpoints at U.S. commercial airports, including Tucson International Airport, clearly indicate the system is not working efficiently or meeting the shared goals. Tucson's historical average wait time was 10 – 15 minutes, and even when in years when passenger levels were at their highest, peak times rarely exceeded 20 - 30 minutes. A common theme heard across the nation's airports is increased number of passengers, increased leisure passengers, which are often families who are not frequent fliers and are slower to accomplish the screening process, and a reduction in TSA staffing over the last few years. This can be very frustrating when there is unused capacity in extra security lanes, but no TSA personnel to open them because of manpower shortage issues. Tucson is an origination and destination airport with less than 5% of our passengers transferring, thus has a high proportion of passengers to be screened.

In addition, under the TSA model, PreCheck is open on average less than 5 hours a day (both concourses total) due to TSA being understaffed and not able to get the manpower needed to provide this important service. As we observe and understand the model, one regular lane is open and PreCheck passenger are provided "PreCheck light." PreCheck light is where a passenger is given a card by the Travel Document Checker (TDC) that allows the passenger to keep their shoes and jacket on, but must divest of all other items such as liquids and laptops. They then must go through the same screening line as the non-PreCheck customers. This is unfortunate because the TSA promotes this program, passengers pay to sign up, then face disappointment and extreme frustration when they arrive at the airport and find that the TSA PreCheck lane is not open. The TSA needs to commit to this Program, and this commitment requires staffing resources.

TSA has limitations on the number of Full Time Employee (FTEs) they can hire. TSA could be more flexible and cross-train functions to perform more than one security task to increase efficiency when scheduling or manpower demands arise. For instance, Behavior Detection Officers (BDOs) are not

certified to perform all screening functions like x-ray, but are trained to be TDCs utilizing their deception detection training.

The TSA is facing a manpower shortage, and it will take time for the TSA to hire, train and certify the new FTEs. Short-term solutions aimed at reducing customer wait times are necessary to manage the summer travel season.

I would like to ask your consideration of potential recommended solutions.

Establish more effective and consistent communication and coordination.

We applaud your proposed legislation "Checkpoint Optimization and Efficiency Act of 2016" requiring each airport establish a joint committee of airport, airline and TSA representatives that has mandatory meetings, and has the authority to review advance boarding data, proactively plan and schedule for the effective screening of passengers and bags and the protection of property and aircraft. The committee should have the ability to meet, as necessary, to react to emerging issues.

TSA's local airport representatives should be delegated the authority to be an effective member of the committee and have the ability to make quick adjustments within established broad parameters to meet the mission.

When lines reach a certain maximum throughput with one lane open, the local TSA is authorized to open a second regular lane. The staffing model does not allow sufficient staff to open the PreCheck lane instead of a regular lane which would greatly expedite the screening process throughput. Some small airports have reported that TSA will close their checkpoint for the night after the last scheduled departure due to the inability to keep staff on overtime. Passengers track the flight via the airline and know a flight is late, show up for the flight and are not allowed to board because they cannot be screened. Local control to manage unusual situations would greatly improve throughput capabilities.

More efficient use of existing resources is recommended. Your Legislations' proposal to utilize TSA BDOs during peak periods to the TDC positions would provide an immediate increase in manpower. This will allow the BDOs to use their behavioral detection skills by having direct contact with every passenger prior to the passenger passing through the security screening checkpoint. We understand and appreciate that Administrator Neffenger has already approved this change.

Allow the TSA the flexibility to utilize non-certified screening personnel to perform divestiture, bin-running, line management and exit lane duties during peak times. This will allow the certified Transportation Screening Officers (TSOs) to focus on and expedite the security screening functions.

Authorize the immediate replacement of and expedite the hiring of replacement TSOs. Currently, the hiring process can take as long as twelve (12) months for the TSA to hire, train and certify replacement personnel. In May of 2015 Tucson International Airport TSA lost 10% of its workforce. Those positions, plus others lost through regular attrition were not hired, trained, certified and in place until the end of April 2016. This process is too long, degrades efficiency and creates extreme passenger frustration through long wait or missed flights.

Authorize the TSA to conduct standardized local TSO training until the backlog of hiring and training is eliminated. A long-term solution could be to consider opening more than one center, geographically located throughout the country to allow for shorter waits for training slots.

Appropriately staff all airport security screening checkpoints, including having dedicated staff and a predictable schedule to adequately staff the PreCheck during peak travel hours and airport operating hours.

In many cases, the Federal Security Director may be responsible for more than one airport. This means that “spoke airports” are geographically separated (example: Phoenix and Tucson; Las Vegas and Reno). It is recommended that the TSA official at the “spoke airport” have the authority to effectively manage for exceptions and have the flexibility to increase part-time hours, reduce the need for excessive overtime, and make other operational decisions, as needed.

Update the TSA Staffing Allocation Model (SAM) to be flexible and adapt to the changing conditions of an airport and airline environment. The present model is rigid and relies heavily on the prior years’ data. The SAM needs to be reviewed frequently (perhaps quarterly) and incorporate triggers that better take into account new flights, new or up-gauged equipment, the change in passenger numbers, expanded hours, etc. When the triggers are activated, there should be the flexibility to make adjustments immediately. Allow local TSA involvement and consultation or sharing with local airports and airlines.

Allow TSA to authorize the PreCheck enrollment contractor to deploy flexible strategies for enrollment in airports at peak times. The Contractor needs to have an effective education and marketing program to inform and register passengers for PreCheck. Offsite centers do not attract or inform passengers. They are most likely to sign up when standing in checkpoint lines. Consider reduced or no cost enrollment until the numbers reach TSA goals.

Deploy passenger screening canines at the high volume airports to expedite the screening process.

Your Congressional review and oversight of how the financial resources collected from passengers are utilized to ensure the resources are prioritized and effectively used for the benefit of protection of people, aviation property and aircraft would be helpful.

Technology should be developed, tested, approved and deployed in an expedient timeframe. Consider funding pilot programs with academic or private company partnerships to encourage development of new technology.

Understand that each airport has infrastructure and needs that are unique and different from other airports. There is no “one size fits all.” While there needs to be standardization in the security screening process, the layout of checkpoints should include more flexibility to make adjustments that allow for the effective use the area, equipment and personnel.

Deploy the TSA optimization teams to review the checkpoint layouts and include the airport and airlines serving that airport in the review and recommendation process.

We are grateful to advise that the TSA at Tucson International Airport is receiving the trained staff replacements, and are able to adjust the overtime to better cover peak periods. We are now at the end of our busy season, and with these replacements, the lines' wait times have been reduced and are now closer to normal. Our concern is that when traffic picks up in the fall for the holidays and our peak season that the long lines will return. With implementation of the changes you recommend, especially allowing for Precheck to be open longer, this can be mitigated. We are also hopeful that some of these recommendations will be helpful to many airports throughout the U.S.

As a long term solution, the Tucson Airport Authority is doing its part by investing \$10.7M into relocating both checkpoints to allow for additional lanes to accommodate passenger growth through a Terminal Optimization Project. This solution will only be effective if it is appropriately equipped and staffed.

In closing, I want to thank Chairman Katko, Ranking Member Payne, Representative McSally, Members of Congress, Members of the Subcommittee, for your time today and your thoughtful consideration of the issues and solutions presented. We also appreciate TSA Administrator Neffenger's willingness to work toward and try ideas to achieve solutions. Airports stand ready to work with you and the TSA to put in place effective solutions that properly protect and serve our passengers.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Exhibit A



