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Written Statement

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Subcommittee on Transportation Security

TSA Checkpoint Wait Times

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Good morning Chairman Katko and Ranking Member Rice and the other members of the Transportation Security Subcommittee. Thank you for inviting us to today's hearing on an issue that requires both immediate attention and long term, sustainable solutions – how to handle growing lines at TSA checkpoints at airports across the country.

Syracuse Hancock International Airport is a small commercial hub, serving 2 million passengers annually, providing air cargo and general aviation services to the Central New York region, employing hundreds of people, and is a vital component of the economic engine that drives the success of our community. The Airport is located in Onondaga County, in approximately the geographic center of New York State and is a joint use facility along with the 174<sup>th</sup> Attack Wing of the New York Air National Guard.

While Syracuse has not experienced the recent increasing long security checkpoint times, we are part of a national air transportation system that links our passengers to the airports represented here today and working towards a solution as we near one of our busiest travel seasons in the year, as is important to us as it is to my fellow airport representatives.

Ensuring the safety and security of the flying public, employees, and other airport users is the top priority for airports. Above all else, we are entrusted by the traveling public to provide safe and secure air transportation. Checkpoint wait times that exceed an hour or longer at some of our nation's busiest airports, have negative impacts on all elements of the air transportation system. Passengers are frustrated, taking their frustrations out on TSA, airline and airport employees; the anxiety caused by concern over missing a flight, or even worse, actually missing that flight, creates unease and unrest among all airport users.

Several factors have been identified that have contributed to the checkpoint wait time issues. They include no increase in the number of Transportation Security Officers between FYs 2015 and 2016; the high rate of TSA attrition followed by the lengthy process to hire new TSOs; record growth in passenger traffic, and lagging numbers in pre-check enrollment. Combined, they created a perfect storm of events that led to recent events.

We have identified short term and long term recommendations that focus on key areas including the need for sufficient TSA staffing, increased Pre-Check enrollment and participation, and the continued need to modernize airport infrastructure. We do not support the imposition of new passenger fees, rather we believe that the portion of the 9/11 passenger security fees that are currently being used to pay for other government programs, should be used to fund TSA.

Pre-Check has proven to be very successful at SYR. Currently, almost 40% of passengers flying out of SYR are enrolled in Pre-Check. We believe that this is the result of having an enrollment center in the terminal, our efforts to educate the public on the benefits of Pre-Check, and while

seemingly insignificant, the airport's offer to validate parking for pre-check applicants. Pre-check customers bring their receipt to the Airport's administration office after submitting their application and we validate their parking ticket. It is an incentive for people to make that appointment, drive to the airport, and enroll in Pre-Check. While not all airports are in a position to offer free parking, we have found that it is enough of an incentive to get people to enroll in Pre-check.

I would be remiss if I did not bring up the need to modernize airport infrastructure. Airports, like Syracuse, were not built to meet the demands of today's security requirements. Prior to 2013, Syracuse was in the same position many airports find themselves in today. Long lines, missed flights and angry passengers. We decided to do something about it, and committed our PFCs through 2027 for the Passenger Terminal Security Improvements Project. We built a new, second level central checkpoint which was designed to bring both the physical screening of passengers and baggage in alignment with current day security requirements, and it also allowed for expansion and implementation of future screening requirements. The new centralized security checkpoint has improved passenger and baggage screening at several levels; new screening equipment including advanced imaging technology, implementation of TSA Pre-Check; improved customer service by consolidating TSA resources into one, centralized location; and the ability to implement new security requirements, such as the requirement to screen all concession employees.

Following completion of the centralized security checkpoint, the airport reconfigured the checkpoints located at the entrance of each concourse as passenger exit points, which had previously been used for passenger and baggage screening, as the exits for passengers leaving the secure area. The airport then installed automated exit portals in each concourse. The automated exit portals allow passengers and employees to exit the secure area safely, while at the same preventing people from accessing the secure area. The portals provide a positive barrier to security breaches by preventing people and things from entering or accessing the secure area from a non-secure area. Through the use of sensors, the portals can detect items that are left in a portal, such as keys, a cell phone or a bag. If a foreign object is detected, the sensor will cause the portal to lock down until security personnel sweep the portal and clear it for use again. In addition to the safety and security benefits of the exit portals, the cost savings are such that the portals have paid for themselves. Because the exit portals are automated, the airport is no longer required to physically monitor the exit lanes, thus eliminating the human error element.

To place the blame solely on TSA is unfair and not a solution to the problem. Rather, we must work together to address the major underlying issues addressed before you today. What we have learned in Syracuse is that communication and cooperation between the airport, TSA and the airlines is critical to safe and efficient operations. As proposed in the *Checkpoint Optimization*

*and Efficiency Act of 2016*, we agree that advisory committees be established at a local level. Working together rather than pointing fingers is the first key step at the local level.

What the airports can offer today is the experience we have running one of the most complicated and complex transportation systems in the world. We believe that the focus areas we have identified and the solutions we have proposed will address some of the immediate concerns, but also layout a long-term plan for the continued safety and security of the flying public.

Thank you for your time this morning.