



WRITTEN TESTIMONY

OF

**JARED M. MAPLES
DIRECTOR**

NEW JERSEY OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND PREPAREDNESS

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“Securing Our Communities: Federal Support to High-Risk Urban Areas”

BEFORE THE

**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
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COMMUNICATIONS**

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Introduction

Chairman Donovan, Ranking Member Payne, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am honored to speak on behalf of the dedicated professionals of the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, who are working tirelessly to ensure the safety and security of the State of New Jersey.

My office develops policies, analyzes trends, shares information, and enhances capabilities to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from natural and man-made incidents. Our strategic activities observe the tenets of the National Preparedness System, while our implementing activities strive to build capabilities identified in the National Preparedness Goal. We undertake our mission in steadfast cooperation with other state agencies, including the New Jersey State Police, and with our many local government partners, including those in the Jersey City – Newark Urban Area.

Today, my remarks will focus on the work we are doing in New Jersey under Governor Murphy's leadership to reflect national priorities, while building local capabilities to address risk and protect our communities. I will also discuss the resources necessary to maintain those programs and continue to meet a constantly evolving threat landscape, our preparedness needs, and the importance of partnerships, vertical integration, and continuous improvement.

Reflecting National Priorities

The US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has prioritized identifying and mitigating national systemic risk. As we prioritize our efforts, we must look to the essential functions and systems that are vital to the safety and security of our communities.

At all levels of government, we must work together in partnership and continue to evolve our focus. In doing so, we must ensure that resource investments reflect national trends and priorities, and do not rely on constrained methods of analysis and allocation.

Partnerships, both vertical and horizontal, are a foundational component of securing our communities, the essential functions contained within, and our collective infrastructure systems. They allow for formalized mechanisms of information sharing, coordination, and deconfliction of efforts. Our partnerships provide beneficial leverage for limited resources and ensure investment through coordination.

DHS and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) have prioritized building a culture of preparedness and readying the nation for catastrophic incidents. In New Jersey, we have adopted several federal initiatives, like the Hometown Security Initiative, to strive for these goals, empowering whole communities to build their own capabilities and strengthen resilience from the bottom up.

Building Capabilities

States continue to build capabilities that address their distinctive risk factors. Those factors contribute to the nation's risk profile. In New Jersey, we have a number of risks inherent to the region that make its security important not only for its residents and visitors, but also to the entire country. Our geographic location, involvement in financial markets, transportation infrastructure, and population density are all characteristics vital to the state, region, and national profile.

As threats evolve, so do tactics. Recently, however, we have seen an evolution towards the use of unsophisticated methods to cause mass harm. This paradigm shift requires us to rethink priorities at the strategic level to ensure the right capabilities are built to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from acts that are difficult to predict, but easy to execute. Such ease of operation highlights a need for first preventers, as well as first responders.

In New Jersey, we have established cyclical programs founded in risk management principles to identify missing capabilities, triage and build the capabilities we need, teach and test them with our partners, and evaluate to begin the process again. We do this in all 21 counties of New Jersey.

Through New Jersey initiatives such as the Domestic Security Preparedness Task Force, we have created and manage programs that address risks, recognizing inherent risk factors that may cause cascading effects across the state, region, and nation. The Task Force is a statutory body that was created after September 11, 2001 to coordinate emergency preparedness efforts across agencies, industries, and disciplines in New Jersey.

These programs build relationships, a holistic understanding of interdependencies and common vulnerabilities, and an awareness of resources available to identify and mitigate risk. Together, these programs are designed to reach private and public sector decision-makers as well as local stakeholders.

Since I began serving as Director, we have created a number of new capabilities-based programs. We focus significant efforts towards helping the private sector build the capabilities it needs to contribute to the strength and resilience of the state. We recognize that common vulnerabilities exist across multiple sectors of the state's economy and infrastructure, and we strive to leverage resources to most efficiently increase capabilities to mitigate these common risks.

Other capability efforts, like the supply chain resilience program, which was developed in partnership with FEMA to identify vulnerabilities in individual supply chains, single points of failure across supply chains, and the consequences of those systems failing, were developed to ensure vertical integration of New Jersey into national priority risk areas. This integration will help New Jersey mitigate risk to nodes vital to both local and national supply chains.

Still others, like our mass gathering resilience program, address common vulnerabilities at locations where people gather, and recommend resource investment strategies to reduce risk. With shared, common vulnerabilities, mass gathering locations are often unfortunately the primary target for actors looking to cause as much harm as possible. Which is why we are

looking for ways to demonstrably reduce the risk of successful attacks on soft targets, by taking a whole of government approach to engage with the private sector and develop solutions.

However, these programs can only go as far as the resources available to them.

Buying Down Risk

My office serves as the administrator of all Homeland Security Grant Program funding for the State of New Jersey. The principle purpose of which is to build, sustain, and deliver national preparedness capabilities essential to achieving the National Preparedness Goal established under Presidential Policy Directive 8.

We also prepare the State's Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) and the State Preparedness Report (SPR), which are recurring requirements from FEMA. The THIRA/SPR process helps the State assess core capabilities and ensure that resources, such as trainings and exercises, are provided based on priorities and the areas of greatest need. This effort presents a unique opportunity for the State to identify, analyze, and manage the risks we face based upon the 32 core capabilities, but also allows us to ensure vertical integration and awareness with federal, state, and local partners.

Aside from financial support to buy down risk, DHS and FEMA have provided support to our efforts through both technical assistance and piloted endeavors. For instance, FEMA's National Training and Education Division shared its National Training and Education System (NTES) tool with New Jersey, allowing us to replicate their systematic, data-driven methodology to measure and focus training programs. This tool helps analyze the training programs used to build identified capabilities, summarizing progress and highlighting capability areas that may need attention while validating what is reported in the SPR.

Of course, the most tangible support to states from the federal government to buy down risk is funding. In Federal Fiscal Year 2017, New Jersey was allocated approximately \$8 million in State Homeland Security Program funding and approximately \$20 million in Urban Area Security Initiative for the Jersey City – Newark area. We understand that resources are finite; thus, we strive to leverage funding in the most efficient and effective ways, knowing that spending the funds we are provided in a strategic, prioritized way can substantially buy down risk.

We use our grant funding in a variety of ways to support activities including the State's fusion center, equipment for first responders, cybersecurity, and planning personnel. When the opportunity arises, we pursue competitive initiatives such as the Complex Coordinated Terrorist Attacks program to build capabilities for these very focused and specific risk areas. Looking towards the future, our efforts to enhance capabilities through strategic planning and proper stewardship of grant funds will continue to support our dynamic risk environment.

Continuing to Innovate

The threats we face are not static, so the methods we use to evaluate them and allocate resources cannot be either. We must be forward leaning to create cyclical programs that continuously improve upon our preparedness.

However, over the past 14 years, the stream of federal funding has created some reliance among states. While initially designed to provide a capital infusion of funding for target capabilities after September 11, 2001, federal homeland security grant funds are now a resource on which many states, and urban areas, rely to sustain core capabilities. This reliance, combined with any downward variation in funding levels, creates a significant impact not on states' ability to pursue new capabilities, but simply the ability to maintain current ones.

As we move forward in partnership, at all levels of government, towards the same goal of security, we in New Jersey are committed to continued innovation to build capabilities and reduce risk. DHS and FEMA have prioritized strengthening grants management, increasing transparency, and improving data analytics. We welcome continued discussions on current funding allocation methods and innovative ways to improve and incentivize further capability building among states.

Conclusion

Chairman Donovan, Ranking Member Payne, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, I thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. By acting together, and with the necessary resources available, we will continue to adapt to meet the current threat environment and effectively prepare for the future. I look forward to your questions.