

Natural Resources Member's Day Hearing – Testimony of Rep. Anthony D'Esposito (NY-04)

Thursday, November 2, 2023, 9:00am
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Topic: Floyd Bennett Field

Good morning Chairman Westerman, Ranking Member Grijalva, and members of the House Committee on Natural Resources. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak here today on Floyd Bennett Field and the ongoing migrant crisis in New York.

For years, New York City heralded itself as a "Sanctuary City." Now, the city is facing the consequences of this as they navigate a crisis of thousands of migrants entering the city causing resources to be spread thin. The city is facing at least 5% in across-the-board budget cuts, which will negatively impact every NYC resident and visitor. Democratic Mayor Eric Adams is quoted as saying that "This issue will destroy New York City." I agree.

Just this week, Floyd Bennet Field in New York City opened its new migrant shelter. This shelter will house hundreds and eventually thousands of migrants on land owned and operated by the National Parks Service. I have continuously been critical of this plan, including in letters and in hearings held by the Committee on Homeland Security and this very Committee. Yet, moving migrants to Floyd Bennett Field is not a solution, it is a problem.

I am proud to be a retired NYPD Detective, having spent over a decade in the Department. The NYPD works each and every day to keep New Yorkers safe and need all of the support and resources they can get. Floyd Bennet Field currently houses many critical components of the NYPD, including an Aviation Base, an Emergency Services Unit, and vehicle training courses. As the NYPD works to negotiate a new lease with the Department of the Interior in order to stay on Floyd Bennett Field for years to come, the city is moving in thousands of migrants. This decision is unwise and unsafe.

But this is not only unsafe for the NYPD. In criticizing plans to house migrants in airport hangars at JFK airport, I argued that nobody risks their life crossing the southern border, leaves their families behind in search of the American dream to live in an empty airplane hangar at JFK airport. I now argue that no one comes to this great nation in search of the American dream to live in a shelter with thousands of others on Floyd Bennett Field. Additionally, there continues to be concerns that the site is a fire hazard and could potentially flood. This very week attorneys for the Legal Aid Society claimed that the shelter was "not safe" and "not humane."

We must find solutions to the migrant crisis. The answer is securing our border. The answer is not migrant shelters at our National Parks.

I am proud to cosponsor a bill introduced by my fellow New Yorker, Representative Nicole Malliotakis, H.R. 5283- Protecting our Communities from Failure to Secure the Border Act of 2023, which would prohibit Federal funds from providing housing to specified migrants on land under administrative jurisdiction of Federal land management agencies including the National Park Service. I am thankful the bill has already been passed out of this Committee.

I hope we can come together to continue to find real solutions to this migrant crisis.

I thank you all again for letting me speak to the Committee today and I yield back.