



Full Committee Markup – FY 2019 Transportation, HUD Appropriations Bill
May 23, 2018
Opening Statement As Prepared

Good morning. Thank you all for being on time and ready to get to work.

Today, we meet to consider our sixth Appropriations bill of Fiscal Year 2019, the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development bill. We also will consider the Fiscal Year 2019 302(b)s.

As Chairman Diaz-Balart noted, this bill provides \$71.8 billion in discretionary funding for our transportation and housing programs – a \$1.5 billion increase above current levels.

Our nation's infrastructure has been neglected for far too long: Crumbling roads, aging bridges and rail lines, and clogged waterways are inhibiting economic growth and slowing this nation down. Hard-working Americans who contribute to the world's largest economy deserve safe, reliable, efficient transportation.

So this bill provides a much-needed boost in funding to make vital improvements for our infrastructure. Combined with the funding in last year's Omnibus, Congress has invested an additional \$22.4 billion above Fiscal Year 2017 in our transportation infrastructure to get our country and economy moving again.

I'm particularly pleased to see increased funding for critical rail and transit priorities across the country. This includes \$1.9 billion for Amtrak, of which \$650 million is for the Northeast Corridor, one of the busiest systems in the world.

Funding is also provided for State of Good Repair Grants at \$500 million – \$250 million above the current level. These investments will address critical rail maintenance, replacement, and rehabilitation projects nationwide and along the Northeast Corridor. These are needs that must be addressed promptly just to maintain safe and reliable current rail services for American families and businesses who ship freight.

Lastly, I'm pleased to see important funding for critical transit projects nationwide, including commuter rail and bus transit.

These investments will be used to build critical transportation infrastructure that is vital to our nation's economy and national security. This includes appropriations for additional funding for the Northeast Corridor, which is not just critical to New York and New Jersey but to the entire country. More than 20 states rely on the East Coast rail system – not to mention the hundreds of thousands of passengers who travel every single day.

I worry greatly about the possibility of a catastrophe in one of the tunnels – the security and economic implications of which would cripple the entire East Coast.

As I told Secretary Chao, the Administration's opposition to these types of improvements is baffling, and frankly, unacceptable. So I am very, very glad to see that this bill provides the funds needed to move these types of projects forward. The Administration has spent an inordinate amount of time thwarting these rail safety improvements, the completion of any of which might actually give some credibility to its infrastructure mantra.

In addition to providing funding for the Department of Transportation, the bill also supports the Department of Housing and Urban Development and other critical community development programs.

This includes funding for core community and housing programs that provide shelter for our nation's most vulnerable citizens: housing for veterans, persons with disabilities, and vouchers for families with children, which will help break the cycle of poverty and dependence.

This bill also continues funding for the Community Development Block Grant program, which the Administration zeroed out in their budget submission, but fortunately bipartisan support exists for its continuation!

I am grateful to Chairman Diaz-Balart, Ranking Member Price, the subcommittee, and the staff for their work on this legislation, exercising the "power of the purse" prudently on behalf of the people we represent at home.

I urge the Committee to support this legislation.

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Full Committee Markup – FY 2019 302(b)s
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Opening Statement As Prepared

Our second and final order of business today is consideration of the Report on the Suballocation of Budget Allocations for Fiscal Year 2019 – our 302(b)s.

These 302(b)s – the topline number for each of the 12 subcommittees – abide by the Bipartisan Budget Agreement of 2018, and continue funding for both defense and domestic priorities as outlined by this bicameral deal.

First and foremost, these suballocations prioritize robust national security – rebuilding our Armed Forces, securing our homeland, and supporting our law enforcement agencies.

These 302(b)s represent a balanced, responsible approach to government spending, ensuring domestic programs are also adequately funded. This includes funding for infrastructure, efforts to combat opioid abuse, and school safety, among other important investments.

These allocations were done in consultation with the subcommittees, and reflect the prioritization of programs in the best interest of the nation.

We do not, nor should we, have unlimited funds to spend. While there are many important programs across the federal government, tough decisions have to be made as to which ones provide the most benefit to the American people.

Approval of these suballocations today will allow the Committee to move forward and bring our bills to the House floor. I urge the Committee to support this report.

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