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**before the**  
**United States House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Homeland Security**  
**Subcommittee on Transportation and Protective Security**  
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Good afternoon Chairman Katko, Ranking Member Watson Coleman and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) approach to public engagement. TSA appreciates the Committee's interest in how we engage our most important stakeholders – the traveling public – and looks forward to sharing our various efforts to keep them informed on security procedures. Through TSA's Office of Civil Rights and Liberties, Ombudsman and Traveler Engagement, we work closely with a number of groups to ensure that various passenger constituencies are well represented in our policy deliberations. Similarly, our Office of Security Operations engrains within our Transportation Security Officer (TSO) workforce the importance of effectively communicating requirements and processes to travelers during the screening process.

TSA's daily interaction with the public far exceeds that of many other government agencies. For example, on an average day in 2017, TSA Transportation Security Officers came

in contact with about 2.4 million travelers at one of more than 440 federalized airports nationwide. These travelers are all unique individuals of various backgrounds and ability, and many are stressed or unfamiliar with the airport screening process. Additionally, every day TSA screens 1.2 million checked bags and 4.4 million carry-on bags. TSA applies a range of screening processes to address a very real, persistent and adapting threat to ensure the traveling public and our transportation systems are secure.

With a workforce spread from Maine to the Mariana Islands, screening such a large volume of travelers and fulfilling our vital national security function while meeting the varied needs of the traveling public can be a challenge. It is our duty to keep travelers safe and secure. *And* it is also our duty to treat every traveler with dignity and respect. We would be remiss to not acknowledge the tremendous efforts of TSA's frontline workforce in carrying out our security mission and our civil rights mandate with integrity, commitment, and vigilance every day.

Integral to TSA's success and ability to carry out its critical airport security screening function in a seamless manner is our ability to communicate with and understand our audiences. TSA is engaged in a multi-faceted approach to improve its ability to communicate with both the public and our frontline workforce – communication that involves both conveying and receiving information. TSA's efforts have focused on educating the public on our processes through a variety of forms, including one-on-one engagement opportunities between the public and our TSOs, public forums, social media platforms, and the internet.

We are focused on ensuring our TSOs are aware of the diverse needs of travelers, sensitive to cultural differences, and able to effectively carry out screening requirements. To train TSOs in these screening processes, TSA established the TSA Academy in early 2016. TSA new-hire training is now conducted at the TSA Academy in the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) in Glynco, Georgia – a move that centralizes training for new employees, which previously was conducted locally at U.S. airports. While at FLETC, TSA student officers train at replica checkpoints involving real-world scenarios such as social

engineering tactics, screening individuals with disabilities, and how to effectively implement alarm resolution procedures.

TSA is also committed to affording travelers with multiple mechanisms to provide feedback, and uses that information to improve performance. Reflective of the progress TSA is making in this effort, in fiscal year 2017 the TSA Contact Center (TCC) experienced a 14 percent decrease in the rate of complaints despite a 3 percent increase in passenger throughput.

While TSA is pleased with this positive trend, we are focused on continuous improvement and ensuring we continue to communicate effectively at all levels of the organization. Outreach and engagement to educate the traveling public and better understand their needs is a priority and manifests itself in the multiple ongoing programs and efforts listed below:

- In TSA's earliest days, we reached out to community representatives to help us understand the traveling public's needs and concerns. A result of that outreach was the establishment of the TSA Disability and Medical Condition Coalition and the TSA Multicultural Coalition. These coalitions represent a wide spectrum of travelers including Muslims, Native Americans, persons who have ostomies, mothers traveling with breast milk, transgender individuals, people who use wheelchairs, and others. We also host an annual conference with those coalitions in Arlington, Virginia, to update our members on TSA processes and procedures, hear concerns and feedback, and answer questions.
- An example of the positive outcome from such engagement is our work with the Sikh community, which resulted in a change in TSA's screening procedures. By taking into consideration the religious sensitivities of this community, TSA now allows Sikh passengers to pat-down their own religious headwear and then submit their hands for additional screening. The change in procedure reduces the need for the TSO to touch the passenger or for the removal of the passenger's turban. This example demonstrates how our continued engagement efforts with a stakeholder can result in positive changes to our

screening procedures that factor in multicultural, religious, and personal sensitivities, but also maintain our strong dedication to security.

- TSA Cares was established in 2011 and provides a toll-free hotline that enables travelers to ask questions about screening policies, procedures and what to expect at the security checkpoint. The hotline is available Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. until 11:00 p.m., and on weekends and holidays from 8:00 a.m. until 9:00 p.m. Originally designed for travelers with disabilities and medical conditions, TSA Cares is now available to other travelers who need additional assistance at the airport/checkpoint. TSA promotes TSA Cares through the TSA website and interactions with the Disability and Medical Condition and Multicultural Coalitions. Also, when a traveler demonstrates a need for assistance, TSOs advise them of the program during the screening process. TSA saw an 11 percent call volume increase in fiscal year 2017.
- Last year, we began a TSA Cares video series to educate and proactively engage travelers with disabilities or medical conditions before arriving at the airport. These videos, available on the Travel Tips page of the TSA website, help better inform travelers of what to expect during the security screening process when traveling with special circumstances, medical devices, equipment or medication. To date, we have developed three videos, in collaboration with national advocacy groups and organizations, focused on screening processes for transgender travelers, persons undergoing cancer treatment, and individuals traveling with medication and medical devices. Currently, we are working in partnership with a nationally renowned autism organization to develop a video to assist people with developmental and intellectual disabilities.
- TSA's Passenger Support Specialist program, also known as PSS, is designed to provide specially trained individuals to resolve traveler-related screening concerns immediately and in-person, enhance the traveler experience, and maintain efficiency in carrying out our mission. The PSS provides in-person, on-the-point assistance to passengers requesting help with the screening process by assisting individuals with medical conditions or disabilities get through the screening process as well as responding to

requests for assistance submitted through the national TSA Cares help-line. TSA has over 2,250 trained PSS personnel assigned throughout the more than 440 federalized airports.

- Training for TSOs is conducted at the TSA Academy and in airport settings to facilitate a better understanding of a diverse array of passenger needs. Some issues of focus include the screening of cancer survivors, passengers with ostomies, passengers on the autism spectrum, sexual trauma survivors, passengers with prosthetics, and travelers who are sensitive or averse to touch. Of interest to cultural and religious communities, we have collaborated on awareness and training on topics that include but are not limited to Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, transgender issues, language access, and Native American issues.
- In FY 2017, the TCC responded to more than 601,000 inquiries by phone or email. The TCC answers questions about the checkpoint experience, addresses complaints or concerns, and serves as the intake point for travelers who need information about the TSA Pre✓® program, DHS Traveler Redress Inquiry Program, or civil rights and civil liberties protections, among many other topics.
- TSA's social media presence has continued to grow. Our Instagram account—which highlights the prohibited items that are intercepted at the checkpoint—has more than 840,000 followers and in 2017 was one of five nominees for two prestigious Webby Awards, the international award honoring excellence on the Internet. Our social media efforts showcase TSA's screening efforts, canines, packing tips, and initiatives that help to increase traveler awareness. In addition, TSA's main Twitter account shared 1,200 tweets in 2017, resulting in more than 31 million impressions and over 207,000 followers. Through Twitter, we focus on providing resources that will be most useful to passengers, to include TSA Pre✓® information, TSA policy or procedure updates (via press release links), innovation information, major event information (e.g., Super Bowl), and AskTSA promotion.

- In 2017, TSA's blog generated 73 posts, with more than 3.5 million page views. The blog includes information to help address passenger concerns, a weekly highlight of intercepted firearms, travel tips and serves as a platform to communicate new policies and initiatives. In November 2017, TSA officially launched a Facebook page and broadcasted its first Ask Me Anything on Facebook Live with more than 5,000 views. The Ask Me Anything series allows viewers to ask questions directly of TSA subject matter experts.
- Through *AskTSA*, our social care team that monitors the @AskTSA Twitter and Facebook messenger accounts to address passenger inquiries, we continued our commitment to customer service by helping passengers in real-time, 365 days a year. To date, TSA has received and responded to more than 450,000 questions from the traveling public via its *AskTSA* Twitter and Facebook Messenger accounts. This includes responding to more than 110,000 questions on what passengers can bring on a plane, more than 33,000 inquiries on TSA Pre✓® including Known Traveler Number resolution, and more than 12,000 responses to help passengers with disabilities and medical conditions with the security screening process.
- TSA's customer-centric, mobile compliant website, TSA.gov, gets more than 7 million page views each month. The agency app, MyTSA, was completely overhauled last year, adding features such as TSA Pre✓® checkpoint hours, a graph predicting how busy airport checkpoints will be based on historical data, live assistance with *AskTSA*, and a searchable database of items that can be placed in carry-on and checked baggage. All these efforts aim to make the traveling process transparent and understandable to the public.
- TSA increased its YouTube presence in 2017 with more than 20 new videos, ranging from travel tips to interviews, and received a total of 1,638,616 views (1.5% increase from 2016). We aim to inform and educate travelers about TSA's screening policies and procedures to better prepare them for the screening process.

- Finally, as we continue to raise the baseline of aviation security, communicating changes to procedures is critical to protect travelers and the transportation systems. For example, last summer TSA implemented new security measures for carry-on baggage that require travelers to place all personal electronics larger than a cell phone in bins for X-ray screening in standard lanes. TSOs serving as Divestiture Officers provide a critical “face to face” element for implementing those procedures by communicating the requirements to travelers at the checkpoint, answering their questions and preparing them for the subsequent screening process. Additionally, TSA utilized traditional media, social media and industry partners to inform the public about the changes to better prepare travelers for the checkpoint security process. We were also able to field questions in real-time through *AskTSA*, receiving instant feedback from passengers and providing quick resolution to concerns resulting from the changes in security.

In closing, today’s threat environment is more dynamic, more profound, and more complex than ever before. With the ever-increasing number of screening interactions TSA has every day, many of which involve travelers with unique needs, communication is more important than ever. As we execute our critically important transportation security mission, we remain committed to doing so in a manner that is respectful, dignified, and professional. We believe our efforts to engage, educate, and learn from the public are showing positive results. TSA remains committed to continuing these types of efforts in the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. We look forward to your questions.