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Office of Emergency Management & Homeland Security
Executive Board Member Jersey City/Newark UASI**

Hearing Date: March 15, 2016

Title of hearing: Homeland Security's Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications: the Disaster of Cutting Preparedness Grants

Chairman Donovan and Members of the Committee;

On behalf of Jersey City Mayor Steven M. Fulop I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to Congressman Donald M. Payne Jr. and Members of the Committee for the opportunity to appear before you this morning.

The intent of the **Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI)** program is to enhance regional preparedness in major metropolitan areas.

The UASI program provides funding to address the unique multi-discipline planning, operations, equipment, and training and exercise needs of high-threat, high-density urban areas and to assist in building and sustaining capabilities related to terrorism prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery.

The Jersey City/Newark UASI includes Jersey City and Newark, as well as the counties of Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Middlesex, Morris, Passaic, and Union. The mission of the Jersey City/Newark UASI is to ensure the sustainment and enhancement of counterterrorism capabilities and planning for and responding to natural and man-made disasters.

According to the FBI and the Director of National Intelligence- the US faces a significant and growing threat from individuals in this country who are willing to conduct domestic mass casualty attacks inspired by terrorist ideology. In fact, the DNI has said he anticipates ISIS inspired attacks within the US in the year ahead. The threat of violent extremism poses a great risk to the Jersey City/Newark UASI region due to its dense population, geographic importance and target rich environment.

The total population associated with the Jersey City/Newark UASI is approximately 4,792,594 which equates to more than half of the entire population of the state of New Jersey making this region one of the most densely populated areas in the United States.

In the middle of it all is a section of the NJ Turnpike in Union and Essex counties that runs through what the FBI and government officials from New Jersey have dubbed "the most dangerous two miles in America" for terrorist targets.

This area includes the largest port on the East Coast, Newark Airport, major rail lines, densely populated cities and chemical and petroleum plants

Former Director of the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security & Preparedness Charlie McKenna described it best "If you want to make New Jersey the heart of America or the heart of the Northeast, the Turnpike is its aorta."

The Jersey City/Newark UASI region ranks seven in the top ten UASI Regions based on DHS vulnerability and threats assessments.

In addition to Port Newark and Newark Airport, the region is home to rail lines, bridges, and tunnels to New York City.

Wall Street and other financial service firms house important front and back office operations, including clearance and settlement services and other operations essential to the functioning of America's capital marketing in Jersey City and Newark

Since 2002, funding provided through the Department of Homeland Security Urban Area Security Initiative has afforded "Tier 1 UASI regions" to accomplish the following ten goals;

Goal 1: Strengthen CBRNE Preparedness and Response Capabilities by acquiring the necessary equipment, training, and other resources needed by first responders to effectively detect, interdict, and respond to acts of terrorism or accidents involving CBRNE materials or agents.

Goal 2: Protect Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources across the region based on a systematic process of identifying and cataloging infrastructure, conducting site visits and risk assessments, investing in target hardening projects, and providing additional protective and mitigation measures based on the current threat environment.

Goal 3: Strengthen Intelligence and Information Sharing Capabilities through collaborative partnerships with Federal, State, local, and private sector stakeholders to better protect against and respond to terrorist threats, both foreign and domestic, and other incidents, such as active shooter situations.

Goal 4: Strengthen Counter---Terrorism and Law Enforcement Capabilities by continuing to improve our counter-terrorism operations and partnerships across the region and by building specialized capabilities to address threats and acts of terrorism.

Goal 5: Enhance Emergency Management and Response Capabilities through the implementation of a proactive posture to prepare for worst case/catastrophic scenarios at all levels of government.

Goal 6: Advance Interoperable and Emergency Communications through the efficient utilization and development of communication resources and procedures to ensure that our first responders can effectively communicate with each other during a major incident in order to protect lives and property.

Goal 7: Promote Citizen and Community Preparedness by better preparing Jersey City/Newark UASI Region citizens and communities to be ready for disasters and other emergencies, including the ability to sustain themselves for seven to ten days after an event and to assist their neighborhoods in the aftermath of a disaster.

Goal 8: Build Back Better from Disasters and Become More Resilient Against Future Events through thoughtful resiliency planning and by developing long term recovery capabilities, mitigation initiatives, and other efforts to ensure the continuity of critical systems during a crisis.

Goal 9: Support Health Emergency Preparedness by readying the Jersey City/Newark UASI Region for a potential pandemic and preparing local communities to distribute medical countermeasures on a large scale, and supporting the ability of the healthcare community to surge bed capacity and other resources to manage large numbers of sick or injured during any incident.

Goal 10: Enhance Cyber Security Capabilities through outreach and education as well as by implementing programs and policies to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from cyber-attacks or other major cyber incidents in collaboration with key partners and stakeholders.

The proposed cuts to DHS UASI funding would have significant, negative impacts on our UASI regions disaster preparedness, response and recovery efforts.

Hurricane Sandy and the continued threat of homegrown terrorism demonstrate how we must remain vigilant and prepared. Threats from terrorism and response and recovery efforts associated with natural disasters will not diminish because of proposed budget cuts to DHS UASI program.

Even in this current fiscal climate, we do not have the luxury of making significant reductions to our capabilities without placing our Nation at risk.

If we are to continue to prepare for, respond to, and recover from evolving threats and disasters, we will need sufficient resources to sustain and adapt our capabilities accordingly.

In closing I wish to offer a quote from your Colleague and Ranking Committee Member Congressman Donald M. Payne;

“These grants are essential to making New Jersey a safer place for families to live and work, and they are critical to bringing economic security to the state. Following Hurricane Sandy, it is clear that we need to invest more to prepare for disasters and mitigate casualties as well as reduce the economic damage that results from these tragedies”.

Thank you for affording me this opportunity to appear before you today.