

**JOINT STATEMENT OF**

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**BEFORE THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE, AND  
COMMUNICATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY**

**COLLEGE OF STATEN ISLAND**

**APRIL 23, 2018**

Good morning Chairman Donovan, Ranking Member Payne, Congressman King and Members of the Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response and Communications. We are pleased to testify before you today as representatives of the New York City Department of Emergency Management (NYCEM), the New York Police Department (NYPD) and the New York City Fire Department (FDNY) to discuss how essential federal funding is to support efforts to secure New York City, the surrounding region and high risk urban areas across the nation.

To begin, let us provide a sense of the scale and complexity of the mission in New York City. Homeland security in an urban setting is an immense challenge for first responders. With a population of over eight and a half million people, New York City has the highest population density of any major city in the country. Our region also includes a large number of high profile locations. The most recent addition, the Trump Tower, aside from a Presidential residence was recently was the site of a fire. The greater Tri-State region faces an ever-evolving landscape of security and disaster threats.

This post 9/11 environment has greatly expanded the role that the City's police, fire, and emergency management agencies do each day to keep people safe. For example, the mission of the FDNY is not only to respond to fires, but also respond to medical emergencies, public safety incidents, natural disasters and acts of terrorism. For the NYPD, this means constant vigilance given that New York City remains in the crosshairs of violent terrorists, more so than any other place in the world. In 2017 alone, NYCEM activated the City's Emergency Operations Center 14 times for a total of 107 days. That includes five winter weather events, two building vacates due to fires, two flash floods, an active shooter at Bronx Lebanon hospital, a heat emergency, the Port Authority explosion, and Hurricanes Jose and Maria.

In the past 15 years, there have been approximately two dozen terrorist plots against New York City, with targets such as Times Square, the Brooklyn Bridge, John F. Kennedy Airport, the New York Stock Exchange, the subway system as well as major synagogues and other sites. In most cases, they have been thwarted by the efforts of the NYPD and our local and federal partners. Tragically, in the last two years, four attacks have succeeded in striking our city; an explosion in Chelsea in which no one was killed; a white supremacist who murdered an African –American man with a sword as a “practice run” to a larger plot; a terrorist who drove a van into the West Side Highway Running Path which sadly killed 8 individuals; and an ISIS-inspired suicide bomber who set off a homemade explosive device at the Port Authority Bus Terminal subway station that injured three individuals and himself.

Working with our federal, state, and local partners, we meet these challenges through a matrix of specialized training, planning, equipping, preparedness programming, and information and intelligence sharing, all of which are made possible by federal Homeland Security funding. We have worked diligently to build and execute a protective strategy that has kept this City safe while protecting and upholding the constitutional rights and liberties accorded to those who live, work, and visit New York City.

September 11<sup>th</sup> forever changed how NYCEM, NYPD and FDNY view their missions and the world around us. Following that tragedy, NYPD recognized that we could not defer the responsibility of protecting this City from terrorist attacks to others, and we have continued to prioritize this ever-evolving peril. Soon after 2001, the NYPD became the first police department in the country to develop its own robust counterterrorism capacity. We have expanded our efforts to include international events, gathering intelligence far beyond our borders. Our work, however, cannot happen without the assistance and aid of the federal government.

Following the recommendations of a 9/11 Commission Report, the Fire Department leveraged Homeland Security grant funds to create and staff a state of the art Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at FDNY Headquarters. Today, this EOC serves as part of a network to manage complex emergencies and to share information by connecting with local partners like the NYPD and NYCEM, as well as the National Operations Center. Members of FDNY’s Rescue operations train with fire departments and first responder agencies from around the country, passing along specialized knowledge that we’ve developed here in New York. Urban Search and Rescue Team Task Force-1 and FDNY’s IMT have provided mutual aid after a number of natural disasters, including New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, Broome County, New York after Hurricane Irene, Florida after Hurricane Irma, Texas after Hurricane Harvey, and Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria.

Federal grant funding represents roughly 50% of NYCEM’s annual operating budget and is vital to our ability to run many of our finest initiatives, including the Ready New York public education program, CERT program, Continuity of Operations Program, Geographic Information Systems, Training and Exercises, Watch Command and Response, and Citywide Incident Management Systems planning. It also funds the Emergency Supply Stockpile, which provides supplies and services to support emergency sheltering for adults, people with special medical

needs, people with disabilities and accessibility and functional needs, children, infants, and companion animals. During a coastal storm, the stockpile can meet the needs of 70,000 individuals in designated evacuation shelters across NYC for up to seven days.

Over the years, the caliber of people we have been able to attract has played a major role in our ability to protect New York. We have hired civilian analysts who are experts in intelligence and foreign affairs. They study terrorist groups, trends, and methods of attacks. One of our most important institutional strengths is the remarkable diversity in our ranks. The NYPD is fortunate to have a deep pool of foreign-speaking officers. This has allowed us to build a foreign linguist program with more than 1,200 registered speakers of 85 different languages – Arabic, Dari, Farsi, Mandarin, Pashto, Russian, Spanish, and Urdu, to name just a few.

Before concluding, we would like to briefly discuss potential federal actions that would impact our emergency communications. As you know, the NYPD is the nation's largest police agency with law enforcement responsibility across the five boroughs. The Department receives nearly 10 million 911 calls annually and patrols approximately 306 square miles – which accounts for some of the most densely populated geography in the nation.

Since September 11<sup>th</sup>, we have greatly improved our radio communications for our personnel, many of whom are responding to crimes in progress. Losing the T-band spectrum would require significant financial investments to replace our existing radio infrastructure. Moreover, alternative spectrum has not been identified to facilitate this relocation, and it is not clear as to whether there is enough spectrum available to accommodate the largest metropolitan areas. The continuity for interoperable and operable communications is essential, and changes to the T-band system will impact Department operations and the risk of disruption will endanger public safety.

Additionally, while we certainly are encouraged by steps taken by the FCC to improve the Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) system, we urge the FCC to adopt rules that better allow us to respond to the full range of 21<sup>st</sup> Century emergencies. When the city issued a wireless emergency alert regarding the Chelsea Bomber in 2016 to every phone in the five boroughs, the millions of New Yorkers who wanted to help were given several lines of text with no picture. In this age of instant access to visual information via social media applications, we need to enhance our country's ability to rapidly, efficiently, and securely deliver comprehensive emergency information, including images, to the public. Pictures provide instant recognition and speak a universal language. They enable rapid response from every potential witness who could save countless lives through fast action. The lack of photographs and other multimedia highlights a weakness in the system and, in the face of emerging threats, the City needs to remain on technology's cutting edge by using public information systems to their fullest capacity to advance its emergency services and capabilities.

In closing, it cannot be emphasized enough how critically important federal grants are to empowering cities across the nation, New York City included, to evolve and stay ahead of emerging threats. Preparedness is a race against time to be ready for the next attack or extreme event. For context, understand that the events of 9/11 took place in 102 minutes, less time than this hearing. Every Federal dollar that flows to New York City improves our response so we can save the greatest number of people and pays dividends across the United States. We look forward

to a continued partnership with members of this committee and the Congress so that we are able to sustain existing capabilities and continue to adapt to new threats in order to protect the people of the New York City Urban Area.

Our philosophy is simple: we have to develop the best intelligence available, expand our partnerships, take protective measures to defeat whatever our adversaries might be planning next, react to neutralize all threats and prevent the loss of life.

New York enjoys the distinction of being the safest big city in America. It is also commercially vibrant, culturally diverse, and free. We can claim these successes are due, in no small measure, to the uniformed and civilian members of the New York City Department of Emergency Management (NYCEM), the New York Police Department (NYPD) and the New York City Fire Department (FDNY), and the assistance we have received from the federal government, which has been a vital partner in the face of an ever present threat.

We look forward to a continued partnership with members of this committee and Congress so that we are able to sustain existing capabilities and continue to adapt to new threats in order to protect the people of the New York City Urban Area. Attached to this joint statement are individual opening statements for NYCEM, NYPD and FDNY. Thank you again for this opportunity to testify today. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.



**Testimony of Joseph J. Esposito  
Commissioner  
New York City Department of Emergency Management  
Before the Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications Subcommittee  
April 23, 2018**

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Good morning Chairman Donovan, Ranking Member Payne, Congressman King and members of the Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications Subcommittee. I am Joe Esposito, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Emergency Management (NYCEM), and it is my honor to be here to talk about the importance of homeland security grant funding to our city.

To begin, allow me to give you a sense of the scale of our work and mission in New York City. Our agency just had a busy year. In 2017, we activated the City's Emergency Operations Center 14 times for a total of 107 days. That includes five winter weather events, two building vacates due to fires, two flash floods, an active shooter at Bronx Lebanon hospital, a heat emergency, the Port Authority explosion, and Hurricanes Jose and Maria.

We were activated for 73 days for Hurricane Maria and, during that time, helped coordinate the operation of a Hurricane Reception Center at the Julia De Burgos Latino Cultural Center that assisted more than 2,000 households. We deployed 299 City staff to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands to assist in recovery operations. In addition, the New York City Urban Search and Rescue Team, which is managed by NYCEM, deployed 190 members to Texas and Puerto Rico over the course of three hurricanes to assist in water rescues, evacuation, and wellness checks. The team brought in food, water and medical supplies, as well as repaired generators for two hospitals in isolated areas of Puerto Rico.

In 2017, we monitored more than 3,000 incidents and sent our citywide incident coordinators to 759 incidents, such as water main breaks, fires, suspicious packages, and power outages. Notify NYC sent out more than 1,500 messages. In September, we launched the Notify NYC mobile application that, in addition to growth in our traditional subscribership, now puts us at almost 725,000 registrants. We held or participated in 91 interagency exercises to make sure plans are understood and necessary protocols for plans are ready to be implemented as needed.

Our community outreach and engagement activities continue to grow as we participated in almost 1,000 Ready NY events with more than 110,000 people attending and distributed more than one million emergency planning guides. We graduated twelve new classes of Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers, taking our total to 1,300 volunteers throughout the city. We hosted a disaster volunteer conference in June and a Disabilities, Access and Functional Needs Symposium in December.

All of this is accomplished with the support of the federal government through various grants. We work with City Hall, OMB, the City's Congressional delegation and our partner agencies to push for full homeland security funding which supports critical operations. In the past year, NYCEM

secured \$25 million in federal funding, primarily through the Urban Areas Security Initiative grant, which provided \$139 million in total to the City last year. I chair the New York City Urban Area Working Group, made up of New York City, Nassau and Suffolk counties in Long Island, Westchester County, Yonkers, and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. The Working Group is instrumental in linking and coordinating regional activities, including joint training and exercises, public education and outreach, and the development of response protocols. This summer, New York City will host the National Homeland Security Conference, an annual meeting of local homeland security and emergency management professionals from the Nation's largest metropolitan areas. It has become the best attended and most highly anticipated homeland security and emergency management conference of the year as it focuses on emergency response disciplines at all levels of government. We recommend the members of this Subcommittee consider attending and would be happy to discuss this more with you.

Federal grant funding represents roughly 50% of NYCCEM's annual operating budget of \$50 million, and is vital to our ability to run many of our finest initiatives, including the Ready New York public education program, CERT program, Continuity of Operations Program, Geographic Information Systems, Training and Exercises, Watch Command and Response, and Citywide Incident Management Systems planning. It also funds the Emergency Supply Stockpile, which provides supplies and services to support emergency sheltering for adults, people with special medical needs, people with disabilities and accessibility and functional needs, children, infants, and companion animals. During a coastal storm, the stockpile can meet the needs of 70,000 individuals in designated evacuation shelters across NYC for up to seven days.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to continue working with Congress on issues pertaining to emergency preparedness and response. I am happy to take your questions.