

**Opening Statement**

**Health Subcommittee Hearing “Examining H.R. 1786, James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Reauthorization Act”**

**Rep. Gene Green**

**June 10, 2015**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding a hearing on this important program.

I thank the witnesses today, and to the First Responders in the audience, for their bravery and service, both on and after, the tragic day of 9/11.

Thank you for coming today to share your personal experiences the committee and shed light on the significance of the World Trade Center Health Programs.

No one here can forget the horrific attacks perpetrated upon our country at the World Trade Center in New York, the Pentagon in Washington, and at a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

During and after the attacks, tens of thousands of first responders - including police, firefighters, and emergency medical workers - jumped into action to assist in rescue, recovery, and clean up.

As a result of their service, these responders were exposed to dust, smoke, and toxins, such as “pulverized concrete, fibrous glass, particulate matter, and asbestos.”

This exposure caused many of them to develop a spectrum of debilitating diseases, including respiratory disorders like asthma, and skin, prostate, and lymphedema cancers.

A GAO report on the 9/11 Health program suggested that firefighters who responded to the attack quote “experienced a decline in lung function equivalent to that which would be produced by 12 years of aging.”

In addition to the physical ailments these heroes now have, many also suffer from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder or “PTSD”, depression, and anxiety stemming from the psychological trauma they experienced in the aftermath of the attack.

Nearly one decade after the September 11 terrorist attacks, the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act was signed into law in 2010.

The Zadroga Act created the World Trade Center Health Program within the Department of Health & Human Services.

The Program provides evaluation, monitoring, and medically-necessary physical and mental health

treatments to first responders and certified-eligible survivors for World Trade Center-related illnesses.

It also established a network of Clinical Centers of Excellence and Data Centers.

For those responders and survivors who reside outside the New York City area, the Act created a national network of health care providers, who provide the same types of services for World Trade Center-related illnesses.

While cancer was not originally listed among the statutory WTC-related health conditions, 60 types of cancer were added in 2012 after a petition by members of Congress.

As of May 5 of this year, 3,700 members of the Health Program had cancer.

The Act also established the Victim Compensation Fund to provide compensation for harm suffered as a result of debris removal.

Without action by Congress, funding for the current Health Program will terminate in September 2016.

The James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Reauthorization Act will reauthorize the critical W-T-C Health Program and V-C-F.

As required under the current program, New York City would continue to pay for 10 percent of the total program costs.

It is important to note that the W-T-C Health Program serves our heroes nationwide. It extends far beyond the New York area.

Both those currently enrolled and future enrollees – live in all areas of the country.

In fact, as of August 2014, 429 of the 435 Congressional Districts was home to at least one 9/11 responder or survivor.

We must not abandon those who bravely sacrificed their own well-being on behalf of country in the wake of the terrible attacks.

We have a duty to serve our first responders, survivors, and heroes with complex health needs from 9/11.

It is critically important that we support the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Reauthorization Act.

I thank the first responders for their gallant and selfless

service on and after 9/11.

I also want to thank the doctors and administrators of the program for their efforts to treat the complex illnesses afflicting our first responders, and continued research on the impact of exposure to toxins and psychological trauma.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.