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U.S. Department of Homeland Security
before the
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
September 26, 2018

Good morning/afternoon Chairman Gowdy, Ranking Member Cummings, and distinguished members of the Committee. Thank you for inviting me here today to testify about the important work of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). TSA appreciates the Committee's vital role in oversight as we carry out our important security mission.

Established in 2001, TSA is a relatively young and large organization within the Federal government. TSA was created quickly following the 9/11 terrorist attacks and charged with the critically important mission of reducing the chance our nation's transportation systems would be subjected to similar horrors in the future. Our people were essential to effectively standing up TSA then, and continue to drive the successful execution of our mission.

I am honored to lead the 63,000 dedicated professionals who make up TSA's workforce, share our core values of integrity, respect, and commitment, and provide security for millions of Americans using our transportation systems each and every day. Since being confirmed as Administrator a little over a year ago, I have spent a significant amount of my time on the front lines of TSA, visiting numerous airports, and engaging with employees at all levels of the organization. During that timeframe, air travel was also the busiest in TSA history and we are currently projected to screen more than 800 million passengers and crew this year, compared to 771 million passengers in 2017. And we handled nearly four percent annual passenger growth over the last few years without commensurate increases in the size of our Transportation Security Officer workforce, which has impacted both training and morale.

I am committed to ensuring we train, develop, and lead our workforce as effectively as possible. This is why, in addition to engaging my leadership team and reaching out to our personnel, I have personally met with TSA whistleblowers to better understand their perspective and hear their concerns. I also appreciate the work of the U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC), Government Accountability Office (GAO), and DHS Office of Inspector General (DHS OIG) to help improve TSA as an organization and have met with them personally on several occasions. I have invested this time because I want to better understand the Agency, its strengths and weaknesses, and what can be done to make it better.

From my perspective, the continued success of TSA is contingent upon our collective ability to rise to the challenge of outmatching dynamic threats to our transportation systems. To be effective and efficient in a changing environment, TSA must continuously learn from its experiences and constantly re-evaluate how it performs its mission. We must not just work hard, but we must also work smarter and more strategically. For this reason, it was a priority for me to issue guidance during my first year to explain to our work force, Congress, and our stakeholders how TSA would continue to strengthen the execution of our mission into the future.

TSA Strategy and Leadership Principles

The 2018-2026 TSA Strategy details the Agency's strategic priorities to be accomplished between now and our 25th Anniversary. The three priorities, which reflect my focus on supporting frontline operations, transitioning to new technologies, and optimizing the use of our limited resources, are:

- Improve Security and Safeguard the Transportation System
- Accelerate Action
- Commit to Our People

I have made Committing to Our People a strategic priority for TSA. Leadership is not restricted to the top tiers of TSA; leaders throughout TSA must make our people their top priority. Our leadership principles as an agency include:

- Caring for Our People
- Communicating Effectively

- Collaborating Early and Often
- Respectfully Disagreeing and Committing to Final Decision
- Taking Reasonable Risks
- Being Curious, Learning, and Improving
- Anticipating Challenges and Driving Results
- Holding Ourselves Accountable
- Being Adaptive and Resilient

Our success depends on how well we attract, hire, train, develop, promote, and equip our workforce at all levels of the organization. To accomplish this, we want to ensure our personnel are trained both technically and as leaders, have job satisfaction and career paths, and are provided a positive workplace environment. Addressing employee concerns in a meaningful way is critical to our leadership principles. TSA has taken the following actions since I became Administrator in August 2017.

U.S. Office of Special Counsel and Whistleblower Protection – *Learning and Collaboration*

In the fall of 2017, TSA developed and implemented live training on the Whistleblower Protection Act (WPA) and Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act (WPEA) for TSA supervisors and managers from Supervisory Transportation Security Officers in the field to the most senior executives at TSA headquarters, including me. This training provided essential information regarding the responsibilities of supervisors, as well as the rights of employees, under the WPA and WPEA. To date, the training has been provided to nearly 6,000 TSA supervisors and managers. In addition, within the last 12 months, all TSA employees have been informed of all rights and remedies available to them under the WPA and the WPEA, in compliance with OSC's 5 U.S.C. § 2302(d) Certification Program.

Additionally, TSA has worked cooperatively with and timely produced documents to support U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) whistleblower investigations, in accordance with all laws and regulations, including the OSC Reauthorization Act enacted in December 2017. When complaints do arise, TSA also engages with OSC to discuss resolution options so that TSA may address employee concerns.

In February of this year, I invited six individuals who filed complaints with OSC against TSA to speak with me personally to get their input about how TSA can promote a culture of collaboration and engagement in the workplace at TSA. The conversations provided valuable input and gave me a better understanding about how TSA can address whistleblower concerns.

TSA has observed a downward trend in the number of new whistleblower retaliation cases reported by the OSC. The number has decreased from 21 in 2016 to eight in 2017 to six thus far in 2018.

Employee Discipline Process – *Improving and Accountability*

In November 2017, TSA revised its policy and procedures for the administration of discipline. TSA's Professional Responsibility (PR) office is responsible for reviewing internal Reports of Investigation and adjudicating allegations of misconduct involving senior officials, including members of the Transportation Security Executive Service (TSES), law enforcement officers, and any employees investigated by the DHS Office of Inspector General.

TSA also established an Executive Discipline Review Board (EDRB) to serve as the proposing official for disciplinary and adverse actions regarding TSES employees. The EDRB is administered by the PR office and is comprised of two rotating TSES members, one PR staff member, and advisors from the Chief Counsel's office and Civil Rights & Liberties, Ombudsman and Traveler Engagement.

While PR remains responsible for determining whether there is a preponderance of evidence the employee engaged in misconduct and issuing proposed disciplinary and adverse actions, it no longer serves as the deciding official for these actions. The deciding official is now a management official within the employee's supervisory chain. This change is designed to reflect that management is better positioned to analyze the penalty factors, such as an employee's ability to be rehabilitated, an employee's past work record, and the effect of the offense upon the supervisor's confidence in the employee's ability to perform assigned duties.

Anti-Harassment Program – *Caring, Learning and Accountability*

TSA is committed to providing a work environment free of harassment. In August 2017, TSA expanded upon existing efforts and established a comprehensive Anti-Harassment Program (AHP) to make sure allegations of harassment are addressed promptly and appropriately. The AHP is designed to ensure our employees are provided a workplace free from harassment, which has a direct effect on the quality of our work environment. The AHP supplements existing agency policy requirements for employees to report allegations of misconduct.

The AHP requires management officials to report allegations of harassment within three days of becoming aware of the incident. Additionally, under the AHP, which is administered by TSA's Human Capital office, management officials must take immediate corrective action, if necessary, ensure an appropriate fact finding inquiry is conducted promptly, and implement appropriate administrative actions when allegations are substantiated.

The AHP also serves to educate our workforce on types of harassment and the importance of reporting allegations of harassment. Members of the AHP train supervisors and managers on what constitutes harassment, as well as their obligations under the program. The AHP maintains oversight of the fact finding inquiries, and tracks and monitors each harassment complaint, to ensure the inquiries are conducted properly and appropriate administrative action is taken.

Every manager and supervisor is responsible for the professional and appropriate treatment of TSA personnel. From a leadership accountability perspective, supervisors and managers who fail to properly address harassment allegations may be subject to corrective, disciplinary, or adverse action.

Career Progression Plan Implementation – *Learning, Communicating and Improving*

Earlier this summer, TSA announced and began implementing a new comprehensive career progression plan for frontline employees. Training is the foundation of this plan, which includes strengthening technical competencies and also building coaching and leadership skills. Implementation will foster career growth and reflects an expanded investment in our Transportation Security Officers. Through defining career paths and tying pay increases to

enhanced skills, TSA is working to provide greater transparency and opportunity to recognize, reward, and promote those who consistently excel in their role.

This year, TSA has also implemented a new Annual Proficiency Review (APR) process to complement this effort. The APR process, which represents a shift from a performance remediation to coaching model, focuses on improving and sustaining Transportation Security Officers' ability to correctly perform security screening procedures through receiving real time feedback based on observations in a live screening environment.

Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey – *Caring and Accountability*

The Office of Personnel Management's Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) provides general insight into how our employees feel about working at TSA, where we are doing well, and what needs to improve. The 2018 FEVS results showed increases across every survey category, including a three-point increase in the Employee Engagement Index—a metric focusing on engagement and morale. The fact that 76 percent of employees agreed with the statement, "My work unit has the job-relevant knowledge and skills necessary to accomplish organizational goals," which represents an eleven percentage point increase from last year, is particularly encouraging.

Conclusion

Committing to Our People includes soliciting and listening to feedback, addressing issues and holding ourselves accountable for making improvements. TSA strives to remain a learning organization – one that continuously assesses and proactively improves all aspects of how it performs.

Chairman Gowdy, Ranking Member Cummings, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am honored to serve along with the dedicated men and women of TSA. I look forward to your questions.