May 18, 2020

The Honorable Roger F. Wicker
Chairman
Committee on Commerce, Science &
Transportation
U.S. Senate
512 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wicker:

Thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to comment on recent funding requests and legislation impacting the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) operations and programs.

The Security Manufacturers Coalition (SMC) serves as the unified voice of companies that manufacture security screening technology in the United States. SMC member companies provide security screening equipment to a large number of public and private organizations worldwide.

SMC members test and validate, manufacture, and field state of the art security screening technology to government and commercial partners. For example, our technology last year helped TSA screen close to one billion domestic and international aviation passengers (965 million). This equates to the screening of 2.2 million passengers, 1.4 million checked bags, and 5.1 million carry-on bags each day. These staggering numbers reflect the importance of the aviation sector to Americans' way of life. Security technology can accelerate our return to economic growth post COVID-19, facilitate a more touchless security environment, and of course protect the American people from threats.

As you note, the President's Budget Request was submitted before the COVID-19 crisis escalated and disrupted the aviation industry. Yet terrorist threats persist. Indeed, terrorists may look to exploit any perceived security vulnerabilities. Moreover, over five hundred TSA frontline workers have tested positive for COVID-19 and members of the TSA family have lost their lives protecting our homeland. We must do more to protect the safety and welfare of TSA officers who protect the traveling public.

Fortunately, the deployment of technologies that SMC member companies currently produce can not only improve upon TSA's current security screening capabilities but also protect TSA

officers by reducing the amount of necessary personal contact with travelers during passenger screening operations.

In response to your questions, for which we have observations, we offer the following:

Question 1 Response: Elimination of the Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response (VIPR) teams is detrimental to our nation's security. The SMC supports flexible and agile security teams that can surge in protecting all modes of our transportation sector. Security must be applied in a layered approach, and VIPR teams play an important role in overall security efforts. Our industry is always in the pursuit of making security technology smaller, lighter, and more dynamic. Enhancing the VIPR teams by arming them with next generation technology will expand their effectiveness and improve security capabilities. VIPR teams are a critical component to keep our adversaries off balance.

Question 6 Response: Checkpoint Property Screening Systems (CPSS), known as Computed Tomography (CT), are the most important near-term investment by TSA for protecting the traveling public against known terror threats. This gold standard technology will allow TSA professionals to more effectively and efficiently identify threats. CT will also improve the safety and efficiency of checkpoint security screening overall by allowing passengers to leave laptops and liquids in bags. In order to deploy CT equipment to over 2400 lanes across 420 plus airports, TSA previously projected in their Capital Investment Plan (CIP) a quantity need of 300-400 systems a year through 2024. However, the President's FY21 budget requested a total of only thirty (30) CT systems. At that rate, the American public will be forced to rely on outdated technology well past 2030.

- CT technology provides lower false alarms, decreasing the quantity of articles TSA Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) must handle during secondary inspections. ($774 million in additional funding is required to complete deployment of Checkpoint CT technology to 2,400 airport security lanes.)

- Checkpoint Remote Screening will allow TSOs to review inspection images at a distance from the security lane. There was no budget for remote screening in the FY21 request. This advancement will protect TSO screeners from COVID-19 and will allow for more efficient use of personnel as TSOs can screen images from multiple security lanes when passenger volumes are at established levels. ($54 million.)

Question number 8: Biometrics is a critical tool for TSA deploying risk-based security and furthering passenger/TSO safety. It would be important for the government to give careful guidance in sanitary standards for deploying biometrics. Biometrics layered, with dynamic algorithm screening, is a great tool that would allow TSA to make risk based assessments and focus on passengers that do not participate in trusted traveler programs.

Question number 9: The DHS OIG April 20, 2020 report titled, "TSA's Challenges with Passenger Screening Canine Teams" is concerning. In recent years, there has been an outsized focus on K-9 teams promoted as being a complete solution at the expense of screening technology and other requirements. The following statement from the OIG's report should encourage a recalibration and give renewed focus on balanced funding:

> This is due to canines having inherent limitations, restricting TSA's ability to train PSCs to detect all significant explosive threats. As a result, our Nation's aviation system and the traveling public could be at risk of a catastrophic event caused by an undetected explosive device. TSA could have redirected nearly $77 million spent on PSC teams in fiscal year 2018 to other security programs and activities to better protect the aviation system.

The SMC has always favored the view that security is best approached in layers. Technology and K-9 teams each provide unique value, and these layers contribute to overall security and challenge our adversaries.

TSA has projected significant funding shortfalls, and this state is magnified by the current diversion of Passenger Security Fees. TSA must be able to rely on sufficient offsetting funds to deploy reduced contact, high throughput, next generation technology and other capabilities in order to plan for the out years. The SMC recommends that Congress restore the full Passenger Security Fee ($11.20 roundtrip) consistent with its original intent.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the SMC is seeking support from Congress to accelerate investments in advanced security screening technology that will limit the requisite amount of interaction among TSA personnel and the travelling public. These investments will provide TSA with the capability to develop security lanes that will reduce passenger "touch rates" (i.e. human interaction) and increase social distancing. Further, investing and deploying advanced security technologies will make passenger screening operations more effective and efficient by lowering false alarm rates and increasing passenger throughput.

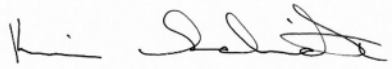In summary, deployments of advanced security screening technologies will:

- Reduce TSA Officer and Passenger interaction, limiting COVID-19 exposure;
- Protect Americans against persistent terrorist threats;
- Preserve the Homeland Security Industrial Base and the screening technology supply chain; and
- Revitalize and facilitate needed aviation sector growth.

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Our adversaries don't shelter in place even if we are in the midst of a pandemic. The threat remain and are evolving. Let's not delay funding and allow a health crisis to turn into a security crisis. Advanced security technology can address both concerns.

We look forward to working with you during these unprecedented times.

Respectfully,

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Kevin Schmidt, Chairman   Paul Erhard, Vice Chairman