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House of Representatives

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Opening Statement Ranking Member Val Demings

Hearing on “Innovations in Security: Examining the Use of Canines”

October 3, 2017

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding today’s hearing.

Today, we have the opportunity to discuss the crucial role that canine security plays in protecting our local airports, transportation hubs, sports arenas and stadiums, and other large venues.

Prior to serving as Orlando’s Police Chief, I served as Commander of Special Operations where I managed our K-9 Operation. My colleagues on the other side of the aisle argue that more canine security is needed. I agree.

Unfortunately, President Trump’s budget proposal cuts state and local programs that do just that. Under President Trump’s budget, TSA’s Visible and Intermodal Prevention and Response teams, which patrol public spaces in airports, bus and train stations, **would be eliminated**. Under President Trump’s budget, the Law Enforcement Officer (LEO) Reimbursement Program, which provides support to local airports by placing local law enforcement teams alongside TSA checkpoint officers, would be gutted. This would cut \$45 million in funding that reimburses local police departments for canine security at more than 300 local airports.

President Trump’s budget puts our state and local security forces in jeopardy. Our Nation’s security is my top priority and should be Congress’ number one priority. President Trump’s budget puts our state and local security forces at risk. Congress must stand with state and local police.

I thank our witnesses for sharing their testimony today, and I look forward to this important discussion.

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