



## COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

### *H.R. \_\_\_\_\_, the “DHS Grants Accountability Act”*

*As Introduced by Representative Timothy Kennedy (D-NY)*

*Cosponsor: Rep. Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)*

Since 2002, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), has distributed over \$55 billion in preparedness grants.<sup>1</sup> These programs assist State, local, Tribal, and territorial governments in their efforts to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from threats, both manmade and natural.<sup>2</sup> The preparedness grant programs that would be improved by the “**DHS Grants Accountability Act**” include the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), the State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSP), the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP), the Port Security Grant Program (PSGP), and various public transportation security grant programs.

The “**DHS Grants Accountability Act**” would ensure accountability and maximize the impact of taxpayer dollars by:

- **Ensuring transparent and data-driven funding decisions.** The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) has drawn attention to a lack of transparency and scientific rigor in FEMA’s decision-making about the amount of funding that States and localities receive through certain preparedness grant programs.<sup>3</sup> This legislation would require FEMA to allocate funds based on factors already identified in the Homeland Security Act of 2002.<sup>4</sup> It would also require FEMA to submit a report on its allocation methodology to Congress at least 30 days before issuing notices of funding opportunities.
- **Providing jurisdictions with sufficient and predictable timeframes to prepare applications.** Jurisdictions wishing to apply for preparedness grant funding need adequate time to coordinate with law enforcement and other local partners, ensure that proposals align with local and national preparedness priorities, reach smaller jurisdictions that might otherwise be excluded, and design well-planned projects that will make efficient use of taxpayer dollars. This legislation would require that applicants be granted at least 30 days to prepare and submit applications. To ensure that jurisdictions have predictability and sufficient planning time, this legislation would also require FEMA to issue notices of

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Gov’t Acct. Off., *DHS Implemented National Priority Areas but Could Better Document and Communicate Changes*, GAO-24-106327 (Jan. 2024), <https://www.gao.gov/assets/d24106327.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Gov’t Acct. Off., *Homeland Security Grant Program: Additional Actions Could Further Enhance FEMA’s Risk-Based Grant Assessment Model*, GAO-18-354 (Sept. 2018), <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-18-354>.

<sup>4</sup> Homeland Security Act of 2002 § 2007(a), 6 U.S.C. 608(a).

funding opportunities within 60 days after grant program funds have been appropriated by Congress.

- **Preventing rushed spending and unnecessary bureaucracy, ensuring real local improvements.** In order to guard against the waste, fraud, and abuse of taxpayer dollars, grantees must be provided sufficient time to conduct competitive procurement processes, comply with contracting requirements, recruit and train personnel, and complete complex infrastructure or technology projects. When the period of performance of a grant program is too short, grantees may be forced into rushed spending decisions and frequent extension requests, creating unnecessary bureaucracy and heightening the risk of misusing funds. This legislation would provide a minimum period of performance of 54 months for preparedness grant programs, ensuring that taxpayer dollars translate into tangible and lasting improvements for local communities.
- **Requiring FEMA to award grants annually.** DHS, through FEMA, has historically awarded preparedness grants on an annual basis. However, the Homeland Security Act of 2002 states only that the Secretary of Homeland Security “may” award these grants, and it does not specify a timeframe. This legislation would amend this language to require that these important funds be awarded to States and communities each year, providing jurisdictions with the predictability they need to plan, budget, and sustain preparedness efforts against evolving threats.

By enacting the “**DHS Grants Accountability Act,**” Congress will ensure that preparedness funding is distributed transparently, awarded predictably, and used effectively to strengthen the security and resilience of communities nationwide.