



Marion County Board of County Commissioners

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April 1, 2024

The Honorable David Joyce, Chairman
Homeland Security Subcommittee
2006 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC, 20515

RE: Expanding funding for the Homeland Security Grant Program

Dear Chairman Joyce:

On behalf of the Marion County Board of County Commissioners (FL-03), please allow this letter to serve as our request to expand funding for the Homeland Security Grant Program. Marion County operates a 7/800 MHz ASTRO P25 7-Site 12-Channel Simulcast System with two ASTRO repeater sites. The radio system provides Public Safety Communications to Marion County Fire Rescue, the Marion County Sheriff's Office, police departments of the Cities of Belleview and Dunnellon, as well as our Office of the County Engineer, Code Enforcement, Solid Waste, Animal Control departments, and Marion County Utilities. Our radio system also provides backup communications for the City of Ocala and interoperability capability for the surrounding counties. Marion County has outgrown its current system as a result of record-breaking growth, and with the county's expanding coverage needs, a system that can overcome the obstacles that inhibit communication between the teams that keep its community safe is required.

We are asking you to consider expanding funding for the Homeland Security Grant Program by \$25 million in order to allow Marion County a better chance of receiving funds for these critical infrastructure updates to Marion County's Public Safety Communications towers. Funds will provide for the enhancement and development of improved radio system coverage through the expansion of the existing radio tower system. The expansion will comprise conversion to microwave transmission and construction of a geographically-redundant Prime Tower Site. The expanded system will be built upon existing mission-critical infrastructure that supports emergency communications for the numerous agencies and departments listed above, as well as the Marion County Public Schools' fleet of school buses. Additionally, access to the geo-redundant Prime Site will be provided to neighboring jurisdictions in similar need of continuity of emergency communications. We thank you for your time, and know your commitment to keeping first responders safe. We hope you will consider our request to expand the Homeland Security Grant Program by \$25 million.

Very respectfully,

Michelle Stone
Chair