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Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
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Good morning Chairman Lautenberg, Ranking Member Hutchison, and distinguished members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) work with the United States Coast Guard (USCG) on the Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) program.

The TWIC program, authorized by the Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002 (MTSA) and the SAFE Port Act, strengthens the security of our nation's ports while facilitating trade through the provision of a tamper-resistant biometric credential to all port workers requiring unescorted access to secure areas of MTSA-regulated port facilities and vessels. The mission of the TWIC program is to provide a means of positively verifying the identity of those seeking access to secure areas, to conduct Security Threat Assessments (STA) to determine their eligibility, and to deny access to unauthorized individuals.

TSA began the national deployment of the TWIC program on October 16, 2007, with the enrollment of maritime workers at the Port of Wilmington, DE. A nationwide requirement for individuals to hold a TWIC in order to access MTSA-regulated facilities went into effect in April 2009, and TSA continues to operate approximately 134 enrollment centers located in ports and concentrations of maritime activity throughout the United States and its territories. These centers serve the diverse population of maritime workers, including truckers, suppliers, maintenance personnel and others who require a TWIC to allow them unescorted access to secure areas of MTSA-regulated facilities and vessels.

The process to obtain a TWIC requires two visits to an enrollment center: an initial visit to provide biographic and biometric data, and a subsequent visit to activate the credential upon successful completion of the STA. While TSA understands that this process can pose a burden on transportation workers who do not live within close proximity of an enrollment center, the process is critical to verify the identity of the individual to whom the credential is to be issued, and TSA has made efforts to mitigate this potential burden by operating 135 enrollment centers nationwide centered around maritime populations. In addition, TSA allows more remote area authorities or organizations to conduct enrollment and activation operations on their own for their defined population. TSA continues to actively engage all stakeholders to address issues concerning proximity to enrollment centers as well as other challenges faced by the maritime population relating to the TWIC program.

To date, TSA has vetted more than 1.8 million TWIC applicants. The majority of transportation workers who have no criminal history receive their TWIC within five to 10 calendar days of submitting an application. Applicants with criminal histories require a more stringent review and generally receive either their TWIC or notification of a potentially disqualifying offense within 30 calendar days of submitting an application. Initially, transportation workers who requested redress following an initial determination of ineligibility experienced delays in the process necessary to reach a decision. TSA took this issue very seriously and, through increased staff and adjudicative process improvements, we have been able to significantly reduce the wait time for individuals in these scenarios.

The national implementation of the TWIC as the common credential verifying the identity and background suitability significantly enhances national maritime security, which previously relied on a patchwork of private and public identity verification and threat assessment architectures to allow access to secure and restricted areas.

The STA and associated TWIC must be renewed every five years and preparations are being made in advance of the impending initial five-year renewal cycle. TSA is in the process of developing policies and procedures that will ensure a smooth renewal phase for the transportation workers who rely on this card to do their jobs. These procedures will both

minimize the operational impact at TWIC enrollment centers and ensure that individuals who have completed the redress process are not required to repeat the process when no new criminal information is found. This will help prevent adjudication backlogs that the expected surge in renewal enrollments might otherwise cause. Throughout this process, TSA will continue to engage the stakeholder community in order to minimize the impact of the renewal cycle on affected workers.

In addition to renewing the STA and TWIC every five years, TSA conducts recurrent checks of TWIC holders against terrorist watchlists and has the authority to revoke TWICs based on the results of this recurrent vetting.

In accordance with the SAFE Port Act of 2006, a TWIC pilot is currently being conducted to evaluate the feasibility as well as technical and operational impact of implementing a transportation security card reader system. Biometric identity verification would require workers to present their card to a TWIC card reader and place their finger on a biometric sensor. The reader would then verify the worker's identity by matching the fingerprint presented to the fingerprint templates on the TWIC. Based on stakeholder feedback to the TWIC Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM)¹ as well as its own analysis, DHS determined that the maritime commercial environment would benefit from an easy, rapid entrance process, not one that included entering a Personal Identification Number (PIN) as is required with the Federal Personal Identity Verification (PIV) smart card-based standard for federal employees and contractors.² TSA and the Coast Guard engaged maritime stakeholders, smart card industry experts, and appropriate federal agency representatives to develop TWIC specifications that would meet maritime industry requirements for biometric identity verification.

Formal data collection from the pilots is expected to be completed at the end of this month. Thereafter, an independent test agent will develop individual participant reports for review by TSA and the Coast Guard. TSA also continues to analyze data already collected in the pilot and will analyze new data as it is acquired. TSA has drafted the report required by Section 104 of the

¹ 71 FR 29396, May 22, 2006.

² Federal Information Processing Standards Publication 201-1 March 2006.

SAFE Port Act and will continue to make further updates to this report until its anticipated delivery to Congress this summer. These reports, along with the direct feedback from the participants, will inform decisions regarding the Coast Guard's rulemaking that will establish TWIC reader use requirements.

Notwithstanding several factors that contributed to a delay in commencing the TWIC Pilot – including the fact that participation in the pilot was voluntary, limiting DHS's ability to influence the overall pace of the pilot – the pilot officially began with the start of the first reader tests during the Initial Technical Testing (ITT) phase on August 20, 2008. The Early Operational Assessment (EOA) phase began in April 2009 with the installation of readers in the Port of Brownsville, TX, and the System Test and Evaluation (ST&E) phase began in November 2009. Over the course of the pilot, approximately 156 portable and fixed readers were in use at participating ports and facilities.

This testimony would not be complete without mention of TSA's effort to harmonize STAs across all modes of transportation. We share the goal of Congress and stakeholders that STA programs be harmonized to alleviate the burden and inconvenience placed on individuals by the need to obtain multiple STAs. To this end, TSA is working on a rulemaking that may propose further harmonization of STAs. To achieve the optimal benefit of this rule, new legislation must be enacted that would harmonize differing statutorily required procedures that prevent harmonization and cannot be changed through rulemaking. TSA will work with Congress to develop the needed legislation.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Hutchison, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and I look forward to answering your questions about progress in the TWIC program.