

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD-5) offered the following statement in support of an amendment to the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act that would restore investments in the FIRE and SAFER grant programs to the level requested by the president:

“I understand the importance of cutting low-priority spending to get our budget under control. But there is nothing low-priority about the firefighters who protect our communities, our families, and our homes. Unfortunately, this appropriations bill shows badly misplaced priorities by cutting funding for the firefighters who keep us safe. Those cuts—\$320 million below the president’s request—are short-sighted and reckless. They will take firefighters off the streets and put our communities at higher risk. So I support the amendment offered by Mr. LaTourette and Mr. Pascrell, which will restore funding for the successful FIRE and SAFER grant programs to the level requested by the president.

“FIRE and SAFER help fire departments across America recruit, train, and retain skilled firefighters. They help fire departments equip themselves with the up-to-date tools they need to protect property and save lives. What do we cut when we cut FIRE and SAFER? We cut protective equipment that helps brave men and women enter burning buildings. We cut power generators that keep fire stations running and providing vital services during emergencies. We cut staffing, so that fire stations are more likely to be sitting empty or underprepared when disasters strike. Independent observers have found that FIRE and SAFER work: an independent study from the U.S. Fire Administration found that grants like these are making our fire departments more prepared and better equipped to protect our communities.

“I want to make clear that I am not pleased with the offsets being used to restore this funding. However, I recognize that my colleagues were left with very few opportunities given the significant cuts made to the overall bill. I am hopeful that this will be addressed in conference with the Senate.

“I urge my colleagues to support this amendment, fund FIRE and SAFER at the level requested by the president, and protect these vital investments in public safety.”

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