

OPENING STATEMENT  
**Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)**

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology  
Full Committee Markup of H.R. 5509  
April 17, 2018

Thank you Chairman Smith. Today we are marking up two bills- one good and one bad. H.R. 5509, the Innovations in Mentoring, Training, and Apprenticeships Act is a good bill, and I support it.

Research has shown that we are experiencing a significant STEM skills gap in this country. Employers are struggling to find workers with the technical skills they need. One cause for the gap is the lack of coordination between educational institutions and industry.

Skills taught in secondary and post-secondary schools are not aligned with the skills in high demand by employers. With an economy that is increasingly data-driven and reliant on rapidly evolving technologies, we must ensure our workforce can keep pace.

Apprenticeships are a workforce development strategy that enables close coordination between high schools, vocational schools, universities, and local employers. Although other nations have enjoyed the benefits of apprenticeships for decades, apprenticeships remain underutilized in this country. This bill is a positive step in the right direction and is a recognition and endorsement of the good work that the National Science Foundation is doing in this area.

A strong STEM workforce poised to take on the challenges of a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy is vital for continued growth, security, and global competitiveness.

With regards to H.R. 5509, the Chairman and his staff responded positively to suggestions and concerns of the Minority and to feedback from the National Science Foundation, and modified the bill to improve it. I appreciate these efforts, and I support passage of this bill.

I see we also have amendments offered by the gentlelady from Oregon to make some improvements to the bill, and I look forward to supporting those amendments as well.

Thank you, and I yield back.