

STATEMENT

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Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

Introduction of

H.R. 7031, the “*Combating Sexual Harassment in Science Act of 2018*”

October 5, 2018

Mr. Speaker, today I am joined by 32 of my colleagues in introducing the *Combating Sexual Harassment in Science Act of 2018*. The nation at large is beginning to reckon with the pervasiveness of sexual harassment and its impact on the lives and careers of women, including in academia.

The academic workplace, when compared to the military, private sector, and government, has the second-highest rate of sexual harassment, with 58% of women in academia experiencing sexual harassment. This behavior undermines career advancement for women in critical STEM fields, and many women report leaving promising careers in academic research due to sexual harassment. Women of color are even more likely to experience sexual harassment and to feel unsafe at work. We cannot afford – morally, scientifically, or economically – to continue to lose these skilled scientists and engineers, particularly from groups that are already underrepresented in STEM.

As recommended in a recent report by the National Academies, this bill establishes a National Science Foundation program to support research into the factors contributing to sexual harassment in the scientific workforce, as well as the collection of data on the prevalence of sexual harassment in STEM. Furthermore, this bill directs the Office of Science and Technology Policy to issue uniform policy guidelines to Federal science agencies to ensure every agency has clear policies and dedicated resources to prevent and respond to incidents of sexual harassment at academic institutions receiving federal research funding. It also creates an interagency working group to improve coordination and communication among agencies.

It is our hope that this legislation will build upon progress already made by the National Science Foundation through recent updates to its sexual harassment policy. It is vital that grantees, as stewards of Federal money, take seriously their responsibility to foster a healthy working environment as they train the next generation of scientists. It is encouraging that other agency heads have expressed intent to address sexual harassment in research. National Institutes of Health Director, Dr. Francis Collins, and nominee for Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, Dr. Kelvin Droegemeier, have both made strong statements regarding their intent to tackle the problem of sexual harassment in STEM, and I look forward to seeing these intentions translate into meaningful actions. Our bill is just a starting point. Every agency has unique challenges and significant change will require creative solutions.

Scientific societies also play an important role in combating sexual harassment in the sciences. For example, the American Association for the Advancement of Science recently adopted a policy that allows the AAAS Council to revoke Fellow status for scientific misconduct, which includes sexual harassment.

I am pleased that my legislation is endorsed by numerous scientific societies. In developing this bill, feedback from university organizations and scientific societies has been invaluable, and it is encouraging that so many key players are committed to addressing sexual harassment in science.

This legislation has also been vetted by the National Science Foundation and the Office of Science and Technology Policy, who will be instrumental in carrying out its provisions, and the National Academies, whose recommendations we seek to codify. The result of this process is a bill that enables a coordinated

approach to addressing the problem of sexual harassment at grant-receiving institutions and that funds research that will serve as the foundation for future initiatives in this area.

I thank all of the Members who have cosponsored this legislation, and I urge the rest of my colleagues to join us and help move this legislation forward into law.