



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Full Committee Hearing:

Building Back the U.S. Research Enterprise: COVID Impacts and Recovery

February 25, 2021

Good morning and welcome to today's hearing. I want to thank our distinguished panel for joining us today. This week our Nation passed yet another heart wrenching milestone. More than half a million of our friends, neighbors, family members, front-line workers, and fellow citizens have succumbed to COVID-19 since the disease first touched our shores a little over one year ago. Even as vaccines are being administered around the country, help has come too late for them and the more than two thousand Americans who continue to die with each passing day.

Those numbers are staggering, yet we must remember it would have been even worse if not for the sacrifices Americans have been making to bring the virus under control. The necessary mitigation measures undertaken by individuals and by businesses, institutions, and organizations of all types have created enormous disruptions to every sector of American life, including agriculture, manufacturing, hospitality, education, sports, transportation, and health care as we have attempted to slow the deadly spread of the virus. Scientific research has not been spared.

We are here today to discuss the state of the U.S. research enterprise one year into this pandemic, and to explore what is needed to get things back on track. For my colleagues who are new to the Committee, let me say a few words about the critical role research plays in our society. For decades, federally funded research has generated new ideas and spurred breakthrough innovations which fuel our economy and create jobs, inspire new generations of young people to pursue science, improve public health and education, and keep us a step ahead of our global competitors. Our research system is the envy of the world, and many nations have tried hard to emulate it.

In this hearing we will examine the ways in which the pandemic has slowed the pace of research and innovation and reversed hard-earned gains in expanding our STEM workforce. I am deeply concerned about the long-term consequences for the American people if we don't make the investments necessary to address the needs of our science agencies, universities, researchers, and students. Even before the pandemic, years of stagnant funding dramatically eroded our standing as the leader in science and innovation, with countries like China nipping at our heels. It is not enough to recover simply to maintain the status quo—we must grow the research enterprise so we can boldly tackle the urgent challenges ahead of us.

For those reasons, I did not hesitate to join my bipartisan colleagues in the House in cosponsoring the *RISE Act*. I was also pleased to be joined by Ranking Member Lucas in re-introducing the *Supporting Early Career Researchers Act*, which is focused specifically on keeping the best and brightest in research careers that they have already worked so hard for. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will continue to join me in advocating for their passage and for real funding for those two bills. In that regard, I look forward to learning from the expert panel about the specific challenges and needs one year into the pandemic, including any recommendations for updating those bills.

Well, we have a lot to consider today, and I again want to thank our witnesses for appearing before us today.

I now yield to Ranking Member Lucas for his opening statement.