COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
Lamar Smith, Chairman

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Statement of Chairwoman Barbara Comstock (R-Va.)
Material Science: Building the Future

Chairwoman Comstock: Today's hearing focuses on vital research in materials science. This basic and fundamental research provides the foundation for important new technologies in many fields including medicine, transportation, manufacturing, defense, energy, and computing, which ultimately helps improve our quality of life and grows the U.S. economy.

Behind every new innovation – from the I-Phone to the International Space Station – is decades of work by engineers, physicists, and chemists, creating the new materials that make it possible.

Advances in materials science have been achieved in a variety of ways, from public-private partnerships, science prize competitions, and through investments made by the federal government, industry, and universities. By investing in STEM education and the research infrastructure necessary to advance this area of basic research, the federal government can fast-track the development of industry specific materials that benefit American consumers.

One recent example of a public-private partnership that I find of great interest is the National Institute of Standards and Technology's (NIST) work alongside the National Football League, General Electric Company, and Under Armour to support an open innovation prize in search of advanced materials to better absorb or dissipate energy.

The Head Health Challenge will lead to the improvement in performance of protective equipment, like helmets, to help and protect head safety for men and women in uniform; Americans who work in manufacturing, construction, and other industries; and those who participate in athletics, starting with children who participate in school sports.

This kind of partnership is particularly encouraging because we should be doing everything in our power to help protect the lives of those who put themselves on the line for our freedom and safety as well as American workers and our children. By investing in materials science research, we invest in both innovation and the livelihood of our citizens, so it is crucial that the United States leads in these efforts.

Manufacturing is another critical sector where material science innovation can help create efficiency in production. While scientists develop new materials in our national

labs and universities, industry applies these new materials to improve manufacturing, and create new products that keep the United States competitive in the global economy.

As Chair of the Research and Technology Subcommittee, I am interested in learning more about NIST's work with manufacturers and other private industry partners on new materials testing and standards, as well as the National Science Foundation's investment in basic research at institutions like Rice University.

Tax-payer investment in basic and fundamental research, which the private sector can then develop and commercialize, provides significant rewards that improve our society and the lives of Americans. We must ensure that this research ecosystem is a vibrant, functioning partnership to spur innovation and create new industries and more jobs.

Thank you to our expert witnesses for being here today, and I look forward to hearing your informative testimony.

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