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

Ranking Member Zoe Lofgren (D-CA)

Research and Technology Subcommittee Hearing:
From Risk to Resilience: Reauthorizing the Earthquake and Windstorm Hazards Reduction Programs

January 30, 2024

Thank you, Chairman Collins and Ranking Member Stevens, for holding today's hearing on reauthorizing our critical research programs focused on understanding and building resilience to earthquakes and windstorms. I would also like to welcome our distinguished panel of witnesses.

I—along with many other members of this committee—represent areas that have been affected by natural disasters fueled in part by our changing climate.

Many Americans have suffered personal losses from severe storms and flooding. Over the last few years, changing atmospheric phenomena have led to a series of devastating storms throughout my home state of California, resulting in flooding, power outages, and mudslides. All too often, due to stark economic and racial disparities in where people live and the resilience of their homes and communities, these storms have an outsized impact on marginalized communities.

This happened in my district last year when massive flooding caused the Pajaro River's levee to fail, forcing 1,500 people to evacuate and putting thousands of homes at risk. The climate crisis continues to put massive strains on aging infrastructure and already vulnerable communities across the country.

The California communities I grew up in are also keenly aware of the threat of earthquakes. I vividly recall the 7.1 Loma Prieta earthquake that shook the San Francisco Bay area in 1989. Anyone who has been through an earthquake, even those not as large as Loma Prieta, can easily recall what they were doing and how they reacted.

Since the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program, or NEHRP, was established in 1977, the program has achieved great progress—substantially decreasing loss of life and injuries and improving the capabilities of seismic risk assessment.

In today's discussion, I would particularly like to focus on the science of predicting earthquakes. We currently do not have the capabilities to predict the exact time, location, and magnitude of an earthquake, but we must continue to pursue this research. Even a few additional minutes of warning could mean the difference between life and death. We've seen this already with

ShakeAlert—the earthquake early warning system—which can give a few seconds of warning before strong shaking is felt. California is a leader in adopting early warning measures, and the Bay Area Rapid Transit system partners with USGS to automatically stop trains when a shake is detected. We must continue to look for scientific and technological solutions to give people as much time as possible to prepare.

Programs like the National Windstorm Impact Reduction Program, which focuses on both wind and wind-driven storm surge, and NEHRP, with its focus on earthquakes, are critical to improving our understanding of the science of hazards and translating that understanding into more resilient communities. I have long supported both programs and look forward to hearing from the panel today about how we can continue to improve them.

Thank you again for holding this important and timely hearing. I yield back.