



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

Floor Statement

Statement by Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

on H.R. 4372, the *MSI STEM Achievement Act*

December 9, 2019

I rise in support of H.R. 4372, the *MSI STEM Achievement Act*.

I want to thank Representative Waltz for joining me in introducing this bill and for his commitment to increasing diversity in science, technology, engineering, and math – or STEM fields.

This bill was developed based on recommendations in the 2019 National Academies of Sciences report, entitled “Minority Serving Institutions: America’s Underutilized Resource for Strengthening the STEM Workforce.” The demographics of our country are changing and we must do more to address the underrepresentation of minority students in STEM to keep our workforce competitive. As stated in the report, “the STEM readiness of students of color will have direct implications on America’s economic growth, national security, and global prosperity.” The time to act is now.

Minority serving institutions have a long record of success in recruiting, retaining, and graduating underrepresented minority students in STEM.

However, more investment and outreach is needed to enable MSIs to realize their potential. The MSI STEM Achievement Act ensures that Federal STEM education and research funding opportunities are more accessible to MSIs.

The legislation directs the Government Accountability Office to compile an inventory of Federal science agency programs targeted to MSIs and to make recommendations for what more agencies can do to encourage increased participation and success for MSIs in these programs.

In addition, the legislation authorizes the National Science Foundation to support research on the challenges and successes MSIs have had in contributing to the STEM workforce, including approaches to building the research competitiveness of MSIs.

Finally, the bill directs the Office of Science and Technology Policy to develop a government-wide strategic plan and sustained outreach program to support STEM education and research at MSIs.

It is important to remember that these institutions are not a monolith. Indeed, their focus on meeting the distinct needs of their students has been critical to their success.

In carrying out the activities in this Act, Federal science agencies and OSTP should ensure they are accounting for the diversity among these institutions and the populations they serve.

If we are to continue to prosper as a nation, we must do more to diversify our STEM workforce.

Fortunately, the more than 700 MSIs that enroll nearly 30 percent of our nation's undergraduates know how to solve this problem. The MSI STEM Achievement Act will ensure these institutions are equipped with the resources they need to lead the way.

I urge my colleagues to support this good, bipartisan bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.