



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

Floor Statement

Statement by Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

on S. 737, the *Building Blocks of STEM Act*

December 9, 2019

I rise today in support of S. 737, the – *Building Blocks of STEM Act*.

The demand for computer science skills is on the rise across all sectors of the economy. To ensure that we have the capacity to meet that demand, we must attract more students to study computer science. A major challenge for increasing the number of computer science graduates is the low participation of women. Even as access to high school computer science courses increases, female participation remains low. At high schools offering Advanced Placement courses in computer science, only 23 percent of the students taking the exam are girls.

Research shows us that interventions at the high school level may come too late.

Girls as young as 6 years old are internalizing gender-based stereotypes that discourage them from engaging in STEM activities, including computer science. The *Building Blocks of STEM Act* directs NSF to support research into factors that contribute to the early adoption of these stereotypes. The bill also directs NSF to support the development of models for intervention to prevent or reverse the effects of these negative and false stereotypes.

I thank my colleagues Representatives Stevens and Baird and Senators Rosen and Capito for their leadership on this legislation, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

I reserve the balance of my time.