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

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Research and Technology Subcommittee Hearing:
Benign by Design: Innovations in Sustainable Chemistry
Thursday, July 25, 2019

Thank you, Chairwoman Stevens and Ranking Member Baird, for holding this hearing. I would also like to welcome the expert witnesses and thank you for participating this morning.

The purpose of this hearing is to explore the challenges and opportunities to expanding the development, production, and use of more sustainable chemicals across our economy. The Science, Space, and Technology Committee first advanced legislation to promote sustainable chemistry 12 years ago. My then Republican colleague, Congressman Phil Gingrey, introduced the "Green Chemistry Research and Development Act of 2007," which this Committee and then the House supported on a bipartisan basis. There was a bipartisan bill in the Senate as well. Unfortunately, it did not advance in the Senate. And that was already ten years after Dr. Paul Anastas and Dr. John Warner developed the 12 principles to guide the practice of sustainable chemistry.

In this job, we know we have to take the long view. However, the longer we wait to take action, on so many fronts, the more we are seeing the consequences of our inaction. The chemicals industry, which created many of the great innovations of the 20th century, has also resulted in substantial harm to both human and environmental health. We rushed to develop innovations to make our lives easier and more convenient, without considering the lifecycle costs.

I am concerned about steps this Administration has taken to reverse the little progress we have made in sustainable chemistry. In 2015, President Obama issued an executive order that required Federal agencies to purchase selected products manufactured with more sustainable chemicals, creating a market for those products. Our purchasing power is one important lever of government, and also a demonstration of leadership. Unfortunately, that executive order was rescinded by President Trump in May 2018. In addition, EPA has a longstanding program called STAR, which has been an important source of funding for sustainable chemistry research at our nation's universities. The current Administration has proposed to eliminate the entire program.

Even the National Science Foundation could do more. While the agency has supported initiatives focused on sustainable chemistry, they have not made much effort to integrate the principles of sustainable chemistry into their broader portfolio of chemistry research and education. While I

support additional investments in sustainable chemistry, leadership is not always about more money or new programs.

I want to commend Congressman Lipinski for introducing the Sustainable Chemistry Research and Development Act. I am happy to be a cosponsor of that legislation and I look forward to advancing it on a bipartisan basis. Twenty years have passed since the 12 principles of sustainable chemistry were proposed. It is past time that the Federal government, in partnership with the private sector, prioritizes investing in the research and tools to enable a sustainable chemical industry.

I look forward to today's testimony and discussion and I yield back.