



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

Floor Statement

Statement by Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)
on H.R. 2695, the *Combating Sexual Harassment in Science Act*
May 18, 2021

The United States has made great strides in recruiting more women to study science and engineering and pursue research careers. Despite this progress, women researchers remain underrepresented in many STEM fields, particularly in senior positions. For a long time, many assumed that as the number of women earning STEM degrees increased, the disparity at the top would narrow. But that has not been the case. Unfortunately, we continue to lose talented women at every stage of their research careers.

In 2018, the National Academies released a consensus report examining the consequences of sexual harassment on the careers of women in STEM. The report found that sexual harassment is pervasive in the sciences and it is harming women's careers and driving talented researchers out of the field altogether. The report committee found that policies currently in place, such as Title IX, are ineffective at protecting individual researchers. The committee called on Federal science agencies, universities, and scientific societies to transparently examine the workplace climate, and to go beyond a culture of compliance by taking proactive steps to foster a safe and welcoming research environment.

The *Combating Sexual Harassment in Science Act* addresses key recommendations in the Academies report. This legislation directs the Office of Science and Technology Policy to issue uniform guidance to all Federal science agencies to implement reporting requirements for all grantees. I commend the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration for their leadership in establishing such reporting requirements ahead of any mandate to do so. The bill also supports research to inform updated policies in the future, it seeks to incentivize culture change at universities, provide training for researchers, and it makes clear that sexual harassment should be considered as important as research misconduct, as recommended by the National Academies.

I want to thank Ranking Member Lucas for his partnership in developing and introducing H.R. 2695. I also want to thank the 24 organizations that endorsed the legislation and the universities that provided input. I recognize that many universities continue to have concerns with some of the details even as they support the overall goals. I believe we arrived at a good compromise that protects the most vulnerable. I also believe some of the concerns are based on a misreading of

the legislation. H.R. 2695 does not interfere with due process. It simply requires transparency while protecting privacy.

While sexual harassment in science is not a problem that can be solved with legislation alone, H.R. 2695 helps ensure that the Federal science agencies are doing their part. No researcher should be forced to choose between her passion for science and her right to feel safe. I look forward to working with my colleagues in both bodies to send this legislation to the President's desk.