



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

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee Hearing:
R&D to Support Healthy Air Travel in the COVID-19 Era and Beyond

Tuesday, June 23, 2020

Good morning. Thank you, Chairwoman Horn, for holding this hearing, and thank you to our witnesses for appearing before the Subcommittee today. The aviation system is both an important contributor to the U.S. economy and an important factor in the national and global response to a communicable disease outbreak. As the threat of COVID-19 continues, it is critical for the health and safety of flight crews, airport employees, and the flying public that science-based policies, practices, and regulations are put in place to reduce the risk of further spread of the virus. Research and development must be part of the solution.

Congress has been attentive to public health concerns on aircraft, paying particular attention to the issue of cabin air quality. While researchers have learned about airplane cabin air circulation and the spread of communicable disease in aircraft, many questions remain.

Today's hearing will inform us on the role of R&D in understanding and mitigating the risk of the virus transmission through air travel. I also look forward to hearing from our witnesses about how the research is being translated to operational solutions, because the airlines, crew, and the flying public need clear information.

The coronavirus is a national and global crisis. Yet, despite international obligations and recommendations from GAO, we continue to lack a national preparedness plan to address the threat of communicable disease transmission through air travel. That's troubling, given the devastating toll that the coronavirus has taken on airlines and so many other industries. We need to be prepared to avoid repeating the same mistakes with any future pandemics.

I continue to be proud of how the research community and our frontline workers like those in the aviation community continue to rise to the ongoing challenge of COVID-19. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about how R&D can be part of the solution to healthy air travel during COVID-19 and into the future.

Thank you, and I yield back.